

PLUCK AND LUCK

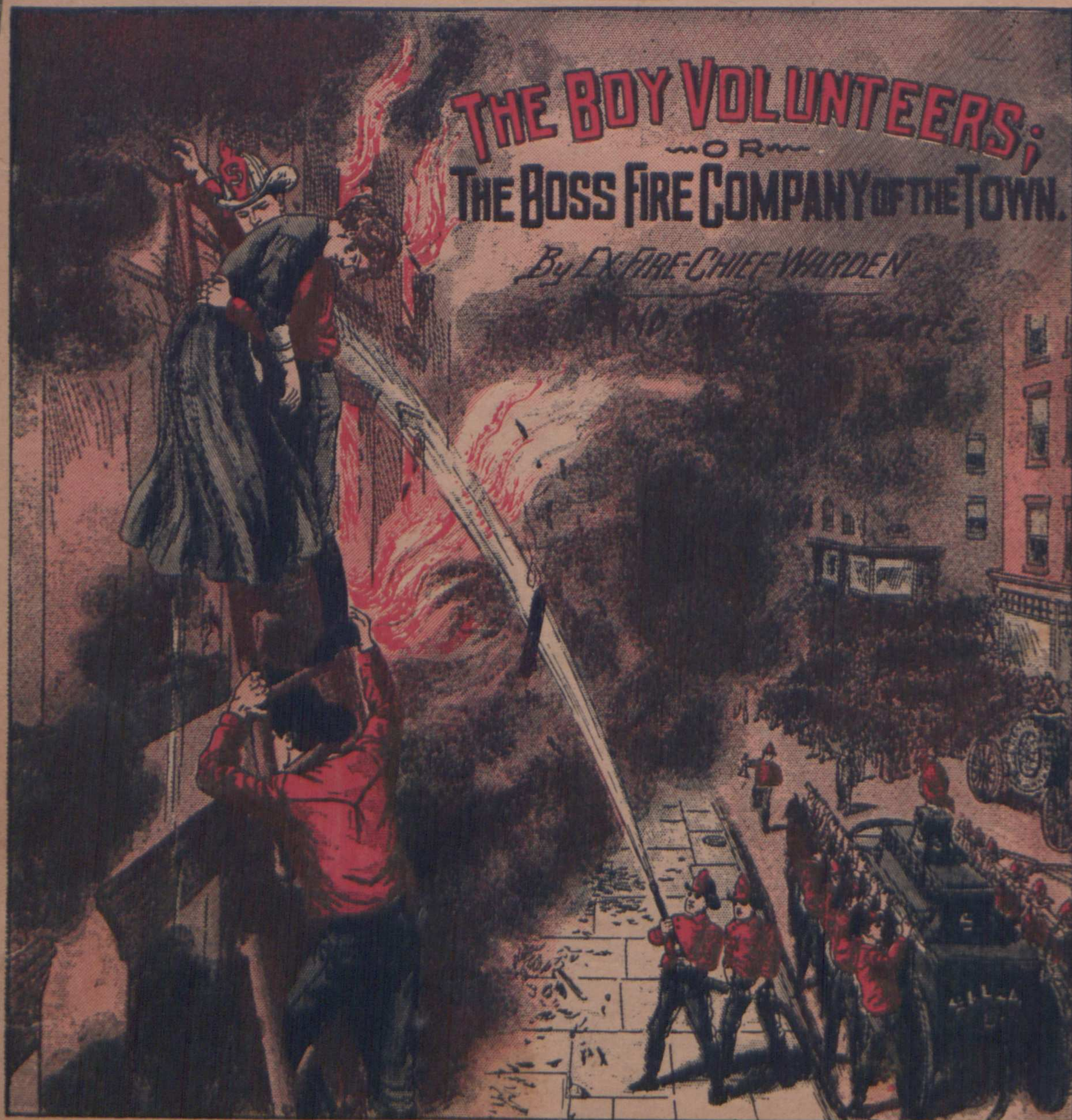
STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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Billy reached inside and caught hold of the girl. She had fainted. He was strong, and in another minute he had her across his shoulder and was slowly descending with her. Wild hurrahs went up from the astonished people below.

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THE BOY VOLUNTEERS

OR, THE BOSS FIRE COMPANY OF THE TOWN

By EX-FIRE-CHIEF WARDEN

CHAPTER I.—The Youth and the Coil of Rope.

A cry of fire! Clang, clang, clang! The great fire-bell sent the alarm all over the town. The volunteer members of four fire companies, brave, manly fellows, threw down tools, yard-sticks and other implements of their calling, and ran toward different engine-houses at full speed. In an almost incredibly short space of time four fire engines were dashing down the streets of the town of Salem in the direction of the fire. The scene of conflagration was in the center of the town, in the heart of the business portion. The building was a tall, frame structure of four stories. The lower part was used as a store; the upper floor held three happy families, who had resided there some two or three years. The fire began in the store, and made such rapid headway that no member of the families above could escape by the stairs.

When the fire companies arrived the ladders were run up immediately, and the work of rescuing the inmates began. But a frame building that had stood the heat of five summers was like a pile of tinder. It burned like pine shavings, and in a very few minutes huge volumes of smoke were pouring out of every window. The street below was filled with eager, excited people, who yelled advice to those in peril with a freedom and earnestness that was appalling. On the top floor lived a family of the name of Banning, consisting of a man, wife and a daughter. The latter was a beautiful girl of sixteen, with sparkling black eyes, raven tresses, and a face of remarkable beauty. Mr. Banning was away at work, Mrs. Banning had gone out shopping, leaving his daughter, Myrtis, alone in the rooms. Myrtis was fast asleep when the fire broke out, and knew nothing of it till she was awakened by being nearly strangled with smoke.

She sprang up and ran to the door, to find the stairs in a sheet of flame. Then she ran to the window and looked out at the street full of people below. A great shout came up from a thousand throats. She was appalled at the danger that threatened her.

"Save me! Save me!" she cried, reaching out both hands toward the people below.

A cry of sympathy came up in response to her

appeal, and the brave firemen redoubled their efforts to reach her. The discovery was suddenly made that the ladders were too short to reach the window. A cry of horror went up.

"Jump!" cried the stalwart fireman, reaching up toward her.

But the peril was too great. She would not jump to certain death. The peril increased every moment. In a couple of minutes more the flames would take her in their fiery embrace, and that would be the last of her. Suddenly a youth of nineteen was seen climbing a telegraph pole in front of the burning building. He had a coil of rope hanging on his shoulder. The rapidity with which he ascended the tall pole caused hundreds of people to look in that direction for a moment. He was recognized as Jack Nelson, one of the pluckiest young fellow in Salem—a clerk in Burdock's store. He was on his way to deliver the coil of rope to a customer when he was stopped by the fire. Up, up he climbed till he struck the wires—about a dozen in number. Then he straddled the dozen wires and pulled himself along some ten feet from the pole, which brought him directly opposite the window of Myrtis Banning. Every eye in the crowd below was now centered on him. He uncoiled the rope he carried on his shoulder. Then he tied a knot in one end and called out to the girl:

"Catch it, Myrtis!" and swung it toward her.

The girl had recognized him, and clutched at the rope with the frantic energy of the last hope.

"Tie it round your waist!" cried Jack.

She obeyed him promptly, and in another moment the knotted end of the rope was tied securely around the slender waist.

"Now throw yourself out!" he cried.

"Oh, Jack, I can't!"

"But you will have to," he said. "You'll then swing down all right."

"But if I should fall!"

"You won't fall. I've got hold of this end. I'll hold you up."

The girl looked down and shuddered. She dreaded to swing so high over the heads of the people, taking the chances of escaping a fall.

"Jump, or I'll pull you out!" called Jack, pulling on the rope.

Of the thousands below not a voice was raised. A terrible suspense had settled upon the multitude.

"Oh, Jack!" she cried, not daring to make the leap.

But the flames drove her to climb out of the window, and the next moment Jack gave the rope a jerk. A piercing scream burst from her lips, and the next moment she was swinging in the air thirty feet above the heads of the firemen, and some ten feet below the telegraph wires. The combined weight of the two told heavily on the wires, but brave Jack straddled them tenaciously, and held on to the rope like grim death. Myrtis screamed with terror. The people shouted, and Jack lowered her steadily, though she was a heavy load for him to manage. Just then Mrs. Banning came upon the scene, and raised a tremendous excitement by trying to get into the burning building. She did not recognize the girl in the air as her daughter, and as two stalwart firemen held her back she continually cried out: "My child! My child! Oh, let me save her!"

"She is safe!" said one of the firemen.

But she was too frantic to understand what was said to her. By degrees Myrtis was lowered to the ground amid the wildest cheering ever heard. The people went mad in their joyous enthusiasm over the wonderful escape of the beautiful young girl. But when she reached the earth and was clasped in the arms of her parents, people cried and thanked God for the brave boy on the telegraph wires.

"God bless you, Jack!" came up to him from a thousand throats, and when he descended the pole the crowd took him on their shoulders and carried him around the block in triumph, shouting and swinging their hats in the air.

Jack was the hero of the hour, and he bore the honors like the brave, modest lad he was. But he did not like being carried around on men's shoulders that way, and so he asked them to let him down. Instead of doing so they carried him on their shoulders to the store where he was employed, and gave him an ovation such as would have warmed the heart of the Governor of the State.

"What's the meaning of this?" Mr. Burdock asked, running to the door of the store and staring at the crowd.

He was soon told the story, and then he felt like hugging the brave boy, for he was a warm-hearted, generous man. Grasping Jack's hand, he wrung it warmly, saying:

"Jack, my boy, I am proud of you!"

"I lost the rope, sir," said Jack. "They grabbed me the moment I came down the pole, and I——"

"Never mind the rope, Jack," said the merchant. "We'll send another one to Mr. Meadows. I am glad enough to give a rope to save a human life. Did the girl get hurt?"

"No, sir," replied a dozen at once.

"Any lives lost?"

"Not one."

"That's good news. How did the fire begin?"

"Don't know," came from a score. "The whole building is gone."

The brave firemen worked hard to save the other buildings in the block, and not till two other

houses went down did they succeed in checking the conflagration.

CHAPTER II.—A Gallant Rescue.

The daring exploit of young Jack Nelson in rescuing Myrtis Banning from certain death was the theme of conversation in Salem for many days thereafter. He had been a silent admirer of Myrtis for months, but had not pressed his attentions upon her for the reason that he believed she had a liking for a young dude—the son of a rich merchant. But his exploit had knocked out the dude completely. She would talk about nothing else but Jack, until the dude was sick of the very name. She went to Burdock's store two days after the fire to see and thank him for saving her life. Two ladies accompanied her.

"I want to thank you for saving my life, Jack," she said, extending her hand to him. "I owe you my life—a debt of a lifetime."

"Don't mention it, Myrtis," he replied. "I only did what others tried to do. I am glad you escaped unhurt, but sorry you lost all your things."

"Oh, we don't mind that," she said. "We are so glad that I escaped that papa and mamma say they don't mind anything lost. Papa secured a floor to-day, and mamma is buying the furniture and bedding. You will come and see us, will you not?"

"Oh, yes, if you would like to have me do so," he replied.

"Of course I would like to have you call. I always liked you, Jack."

Jack blushed like a girl, and said he would be sure to call. Strange to say, nearly every fireman in the four companies took offense at the fulsome praise showered on young Nelson, who was not a fireman. When the fire companies were organized no one under twenty-one years of age was allowed to join. Jack was but nineteen when he distinguished himself by rescuing Myrtis Banning, hence could not be a fireman. The papers made matters worse by praising Jack's heroism and tact as being somewhat superior to that of the firemen. At last some of the firemen made remarks that incensed Jack's friends, and Jack expressed the wish that he and his companions could have an engine and company of their own.

"Organize a company, Jack," said Myrtis, "and I'll go to all the merchants in Salem, and beg them to buy another engine for you."

That started the young hero. He went around the boys of evenings with a paper getting names. At the end of a week he had half a hundred names of boys between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one years on his list. They all watched the companies so closely that they really had little to learn in the way of firemen's duties. True to her promise, Myrtis sought the prominent merchants and begged them to buy an engine for the boys. They took hold with a hearty good will, and in a month's time the engine was bought and paid for, together with a hook and ladder truck—all complete. Then the city council took action in the matter, and gave them an engine house, where the boys met and adopted a uniform and a name for their company.

Their uniform was to be black trousers and red shirt and fireman's hat, with white leather belt, and for a name they agreed to call themselves The Salem Boys' Fire Company. Jack Nelson was made foreman, and he lost no time in putting the boys through a drill that promised them a future they would have reason to be proud of. They met every evening at their engine house to make themselves perfect in everything pertaining to their duties, and were laughed at by the other firemen, who threatened to squirt water on 'em if they got in their way at a fire. At last Jack notified the mayor that at the next alarm of fire the Salem Boys would be on hand to help in the work of saving life and property.

A week later the alarm came, and every fireman in town made a dash for the engine houses. The fire was on one of the main business streets, in a large building four stories high, and to the surprise of all the other firemen, the Salem Boys were the first to reach it. They had a ladder up and a stream of water going when the first of the other companies came up. The chief of the fire department came up and gazed at the boys for a few minutes, and then said:

"They do as well as the others."

"They are in our way," said Foreman Hutchins, of Salem No. 3, to the chief.

"Don't you get in their way," the chief replied. "They were the first on the ground, and are doing good service. Look there! They are taking the girls out of the third-story windows! Up with your ladders and help them!"

No. 3 had to obey the chief, and in another minute they were doing their best to save the girls. Suddenly a girl appeared at a window on the top floor and shrieked for help. There was no ladder on the ground that could reach above the third story. A cry of horror burst from the crowd below, for the idea of a young girl burning to death in the sight of those who are trying to save her, is absolutely revolting to men of even brutal instincts.

"What shall we do?" the foreman of No. 3 asked the fire chief. "Our ladders can't reach her, and nobody can enter the building."

Before the chief could make any reply, Jack Nelson seized a short ladder and ran up the long one with it. Everybody stared at him in amazement. The young girl had fallen back from the window, having been overcome by terror and smoke. But the young hero never faltered for a moment. He reached the top of the long ladder, braced himself firmly, and then balanced the shorter one on his shoulders, thus making it reach to within a couple of feet of the upper window. Then the crowd below saw his object, and the chief of the fire department was the first to applaud him. Billy Malone, a small, wiry, little fellow, climbed upon Jack's shoulders and crept up the shorter ladder, amid the breathless suspense of the crowd below and the roaring of the flames in the building. Reaching the window, Billy reached inside and caught hold of the girl. She had fainted. He was strong, and in another minute he had her across his shoulder and was slowly descending with her. Wild hurrahs went up from the astonished people below. Their shouts fairly shook the buildings around. But

when he reached Jack Nelson's shoulders, and handed the girl down to him, who could use but one hand to aid him, the cheers went up like the rear of the ocean in a storm.

The terrible strain on Jack caused him to let the ladder fall when the daring young fireman climbed down off his shoulders, and it went crashing below, narrowly missing one of the firemen of No. 3. But Billy carried the young girl safely down the long ladder, and Jack followed, ready to drop from sheer fatigue. The wild enthusiasm of the crowd broke out anew, and Jack and Billy were the only names that could be heard. Both boys were seized by the boisterous mob, and hoisted on stalwart shoulders.

"Let us down, fellows!" cried Jack. "We have work to do yet!"

"You've done enough for to-day, my boy," cried a strong-voiced man in the crowd.

Jack raised his trumpet to his lips and called out to his boys:

"Salem Boys, do your duty. Keep up a steady stream!"

"All right, Jack!" they responded.

"Now let me down, fellows," he asked again, turning to the men who had him and Billy Malone on their shoulders.

But they would not.

"Turn the water on here," he called through the trumpet to the Salem Boys, and in another moment the stream of water was turned on the crowd, wetting Jack and Billy with the rest.

It caused a lively stampede, and the two young heroes were dropped with haste, and allowed to go back to the post of duty. The fire was prevented from spreading, but the building was entirely destroyed when it started. Yet the water was kept going as long as a spark of fire remained, and then, when water controlled the premises, they took their departure and returned to their quarters.

CHAPTER III.—Old Mag Mullins' Mutterings.

The next morning the papers were full of accounts of the fire. Everybody was eager to get all the news, and so every copy printed had a reader. One paper said the Salem Boys' Fire Company was the first on the ground, threw the first stream of water, put up the first ladder, and rescued the first person saved. Then followed a graphic description of Jack and Bill's daring rescue of the young work girl from the top floor, ending with the sentence:

"The Salem Boys' Company is the boss fire company of the town."

Of course, that made our young heroes glad, and the older firemen mad, and a bad feeling at once arose between the boys and the other four companies. The chief of the fire department tried hard to allay the ill-feeling, but could not do so. The entire force was voluntary in character and service, and hence the men exercised more or less independence in their individual capacities. Some threatened to resign if any more individual comparisons were made in the press. But many others said nothing, though they did not like the appearance of the nimble-footed boys in the fire

department of the town. To add to the disgust of the older firemen, all the young ladies in the town began to extol the Salem boys as young heroes, and wore their colors on all occasions.

"It's a craze," said an old fireman, very philosophically, one day, "which nothing can stop till it has run its course. It's the fashion just now, but it won't last long," and he knocked the ashes from his pipe and went about his business with an air of heroic resignation.

But the younger firemen were not so philosophical in their view of the case. They believed that a conspiracy had been formed among the boys and their friends to monopolize the honors of the service. Said one in his anger:

"I believe that they had notice of that fire at least five minutes before we did, which shows that there is some kind of conspiracy against us. The idea that a pack of boys can do better and quicker work than as many grown men can is utterly absurd!"

"Yes, that's so," said another. "I am going to watch 'em hereafter. Jack Nelson is a brave fellow, and I have always been his friend. But if he wants to find out what we really can do, he can be satisfied so quickly as to make his head swim."

"If people knew as much about Jack as I do," remarked another fireman, shaking his head significantly, "they wouldn't think him much of a hero."

"What do you know?" three or four asked at once.

"I know enough," said the man, shaking his head, "and if Jack doesn't subside a little I'll give him dead away, and lay him out so completely that all the water his boys could throw on him couldn't clean him."

That was meat to the envious ones of the older firemen, and in less than a week every member of the four companies had heard that one of their number was in possession of facts that affected the character of Jack Nelson, the foreman of the Salem Boy's Fire Company.

"What the deuce is it you know, Tom?" one of the other firemen asked.

"I know enough and yet don't know half," and Tom Bussy shook his head significantly as he spoke.

"Well, why in thunder don't you tell us what you do know, and let us find out the rest?" queried Jim Hicks.

Tom looked at his brother fireman in silence for a minute or two, and then shook his head, saying:

"One had better be careful how he talks nowadays. I don't want to get into any trouble by talking about other people. I'll tell you all about it some other time."

"When will that some other time be, Tom?" Jim asked.

"Oh, to-night, maybe," and he looked around at a young man who was standing not far off, of whom he appeared to be suspicious.

The young man went away on finding himself regarded suspiciously, and then Tom said:

"Old Mag Mullins, down in Jackson's Lane, can tell you all about it. She has known all about him ever since he was born."

"Ah, she'll tell us, will she?"

"Reckon she will. I've heard her say a good deal myself."

"She's very old, isn't she?"

"Yes—seventy-five, at least."

"And she knows all about Jack?"

"Lord, yes. She hints at mysterious murder and all that sort of thing."

"Good heavens!" gasped Jim Hicks. "We must look into this thing, boys. We are all firemen, you know, and have a pride in keeping disreputable characters out of the fire department."

"Yes, that's so," said Tom, nodding his head to the others, "and I'll see if we can't have a talk with the old woman."

"Let's see her as soon as possible. The young villain is brave and reckless, and just the sort of fellow to captivate everybody with exploits that challenge admiration. But if he is a villain of a blackened reputation, the people ought to know it, and the sooner they do the better."

The other three agreed with him, and so it was arranged that Tom and Jim were to call on old Mag Mullins that night, at a little old frame house down in Jackson Lane, where she lived with a married grand-daughter. Tom was the only one who was acquainted with the old lady—and he made her acquaintance through her grand-daughter's husband, Ed Slaughter, a shopmate of his. That evening Slaughter was surprised at receiving a visit from Tom Bussy and Jim Hicks. He knew Hicks by sight, but had never been introduced to him. Of course, Ed had to make it pleasant for his visitors, and the usual custom was resorted to. He sent for a pitcher of beer, and then they sat around a table and drank and talked.

Mrs. Slaughter was a lively, bustling young woman, who liked fun as much as anybody did, and so she and her husband succeeded in making it pleasant for the two visitors. The old lady sat in a corner peering into the fire, as if long-forgotten memories fitted in and out among the glowing coals. She seemed to take not the least interest in the conversation going on round the table. In her hands she held a half-knitted stocking, while a ball of worsted rested in her lap. Suddenly she heard Ed say:

"Yes, Jack Nelson is a brave fellow, and no mistake. He don't seem to care any more for fire than a salamander does."

"That's so," said Hicks. "I never saw such a fellow for recklessness. Why, I wouldn't think of doing the things that he does for all the wealth of Salem."

"Ah, Jack is a wild boy!" said the old lady, "and when he comes to have his account settled he'll be in a bad way. Yes, in a bad way—a bad way," and the old lady shook her head, and gazed into the fire as earnestly as if she had been speaking to the coals, instead of the people around the table.

"Why, what has Jack done that is so bad, Aunt Mag?" Tom Bussy asked, turning to the old lady.

"Oh, never mind grandma," said Mrs. Slaughter, in a whisper.

"Bad enough," said the old lady. "When the grave gives up its dead the whole truth will be known, and justice will be done then if not before. Yes, it will be done then. Oh, the blood!"

The sin—the crime of that awful night. Yes, and they say Jack is now a bold fireman. Well—well—he'll have fire enough after a while, and he can't put it out, either. Ha, ha, ha—he'll be fooled, then! He can't put it out!"

Tom and Jim stared at each other in blank astonishment.

"What does she mean, Ed?" Tom Bussy asked, turning to Slaughter.

"Oh, she talks that way every time she hears Jack's name mentioned, but won't tell us all she means."

"Does she know Jack?"

"I guess she does. She came from where Jack was born and reared."

"Where is that?"

"Mayfield."

"Oh, he came from Mayfield?"

"Yes."

"Well, we didn't know that."

"Yes, in Mayfield," continued the old woman. "In Mayfield. They did it all in Mayfield, and all that the wrong child might have the property. Oh, it's right that justice is meted out to wrongdoers in the next world when it fails in this one. Jack Nelson ought to be in the blackest dungeon in this world instead of running to fires, and—"

Something struck the side of the house with the force of a cannon ball, shaking it from floor to roof. The women screamed, and the men ran out to see what caused it.

CHAPTER IV.—The Tongue of Slander.

Out on the street the three men ran up and down the block in quest of the one who had thrown the stone—for such it proved to be—against the side of the house. But they failed to find a single soul anywhere on the block.

"It's very strange," said Ed. "I never knew that to happen before. Just look at the size of that stone, will you?" and he pointed to a stone which the flickering light from the gas-lamp across the street revealed to him at his feet.

Tom picked up the stone.

"Why, it weighs at least ten pounds!" he exclaimed.

Jim took it in his hands and held it out as if to guess its weight.

"Yes, all of that," he said, "and it was thrown by a mighty strong arm, too."

"Of course it was. No boy could hurl a stone of that size. A little more force would have sent it through the house. I am a poor man, but I will give ten dollars to know the man who threw it."

"I'd give five," said Tom.

"So would I," added Jim. "I'd like to drop it on his head."

Ed took the stone and carried it in the house. Tom and Jim followed him. They sat down to the table. The rock was laid on the table by the pitcher of beer, in which there was one more round of drinks. The old woman sat looking in the fire, whither than they had ever seen her before. She did not seem even to hear what the others were saying, so intent was she in watching the little coals in the grate.

"You were saying something about Jack Nelson, Aunt Mag," said Tom, offering her a glass of beer from the pitcher.

She never noticed the remark or the glass of beer, but gazed steadily at the fire.

"What about Jack, Aunt Mag?" Tom asked, nudging her with his elbow.

"Huh?" she answered, looking around at him.

"Have a glass of beer?"

She took the glass. But her hand trembled with the weakness of old age as she bore it to her lips. When she had swallowed the contents of the glass, Tom reached over and took it from her hand.

"What were you saying about Jack, Aunt Mag?" he asked.

"Huh?"

"Is she deaf?" Tom asked of Ed in a whisper.

"Not very much," replied Ed. "I guess the shock of that stone against the side of the house has rather upset her. I would not ask her any more about it to-night."

"Jack is in everybody's mouth just now," put in Hicks, "and everything connected with him is of interest, you know."

"Yes, that's so. She talks pretty freely sometimes, and then shuts up suddenly, like a clam."

Tom made several efforts to make the old woman talk again, but all in vain. She would not understand anything he said, seeming to be like one mesmerized, or under some kind of overpowering influence which rendered her incapable of comprehending anything said to her in reference to Jack Nelson.

"I never saw her exactly in that mood before," said Ed, looking sideways at her. "She seems to be laboring under some kind of a spell."

"Is she excited?"

"She doesn't seem to be."

"Grandma," said Mrs. Slaughter, "it's ten o'clock."

"Huh?"

"It's ten o'clock—your bedtime, you know."

The old woman arose, and leaning heavily on a cane, followed her granddaughter out of the room, leaving the three men together at the table.

"I'd like to know who threw that stone," remarked Ed.

The others were far more interested in knowing what the old lady knew about Jack. But Ed did not suspect the motive of the visit, and so he continued to talk about everything else but Jack, to their infinite disgust. At last they came away, promising to come around some other evening and have a quiet, social game of cards with Ed and his wife. They walked a couple of blocks after leaving the cottage, and then turned back about the object of the visit.

"Tom," said Hicks, "mysterious crime locked sure as fate."

"Just what I was thinking. I think we would have if that stone hadn't struck."

"No doubt of it. I'd lead the head of the fellow."

"So would I. That's that secret. If I could get three or four glasses of beer, I would be loose enough."

she treated Henry W. Dell the
him tell me
He lost no
them were clerks
was of the dude

There's a murder somewhere in all that mystery. That's something I didn't think of Jack, though."

"I say, Tom, how old is Jack?"

"About nineteen or twenty, I should say."

"How long has he been in Salem?"

"Some two or three years."

"Where do his parents live?"

"I don't know whether they live anywhere—think they are dead."

"Well, we know enough to set us on the track of Nelson. That there is something behind all this that will lay him out as thin as boarding-house butter on bread I'd bet my last nickel."

"So would I," remarked the other, "but I would like to know just what it is."

"Yes, of course."

They were both at their engine-house the next night, where the firemen had a thousand questions to ask them about what they had learned of Jack. It did not take them long to tell all they had heard. But that was enough to make mischief sufficient for an ordinary lifetime. Every fireman who took an interest in the dirty work told what he had heard in his own way, each one adding a little embellishment of the warmth and color of his own fancy. The result was that it was whispered all over Salem in a few days that Jack Nelson was guilty of all the crimes in the calendar before he came to Salem.

Somebody told Myrtis Banning that Jack had been mixed up in a horrible murder two or three years ago in another town. It was a young man—a member of one of the old fire companies—who told her the story.

"I don't believe it," she said. "Nor do you believe it."

"I don't know anything about it," said the young man, shrugging his shoulders.

"But you repeat it to his injury."

"People ought to know if it is true."

"But you repeat it without knowing whether it is true or not."

"Oh, if he is innocent it can't hurt him."

"Well, I shall tell him what you have said, and then tell you what he says. Then I shall watch to see if you will repeat his version or repeat the one you have just told me."

"Oh, I didn't mean to do him any injury," said the young man.

"You didn't?"

"No."

"Well, that's strange. You have not said a good word about him this evening, and yet told a story which if true, would ruin him forever."

The young man went away very sorry that he had made the mistake of repeating the story to Myrtis. Two evenings later Jack called on Myrtis at her invitation, and heard the story for the first time. He was astounded.

"That is going too far," he said. "I shall see if I can't trace it up to the fountain head."

"You won't get into a fight about it, will you?" she asked.

"I don't know. That depends upon how I am treated when I ask about the story. I'll tackle Henry Wildey, your informant, first, and make him tell me where he got the story."

He lost no time in hunting up Wildey. Both of them were clerks in the same block. But Wildey was of the dude order, being the son of a very

aristocratic widow of Salem. It was about noon the next day when Jack met Wildey in the street in front of the store where he was employed.

"I say, Wildey," he said, "will you be kind enough to give me the name of the one who told you the story you repeated to Myrtis Banning the other night?"

"No, I cannot."

"Why not?"

"Because it was told to me by a friend."

"But your friend injured me by telling the story."

"Not much. He only told me."

"Oh, I suppose I could not be injured with you. But you will give me his name or take a thrashing right here."

"What! Do you dare to——"

"Oh, yes. Will you give me the name?"

"No."

The word had scarcely passed young Wildey's lips when Jack knocked him down by a blow between the eyes. People at once ran forward to see a fight. Wildey scrambled to his feet and put up his fists. Down he went again. Up he came and faced Jack once more. Jack gave him a couple of blows next time that caused him to prefer to lie down than get up. By this time a police officer came along and arrested both of them. They were followed to the station house, where bail was promptly given for both of them, and then they went their respective ways. The news of the fight soon spread, and that evening nothing else was talked of in the five fire engine houses of Salem.

The next morning the magistrate dismissed the case when he heard Jack's side of the story. During that week there was a fire in which Jack rescued an infant and a rich old bachelor named John Harper, who boarded in the burned building. In the meantime Wildey was thirsting for revenge upon the boy fireman. He met Tom Bussy and Jim Hicks and the three put their heads together to formulate some plan. They concluded to call on Ed Slaughter and learn from the old woman what she knew about Jack. They did so, and when the old woman started to talk about Jack a stone crashed against the house and when the four men rushed out another stone struck Tom Bussy on the head and rendered him unconscious.

Tom was carried into the house. Nothing had been heard or seen of the stone thrower. A physician attended Tom, who was sent to a hospital for treatment.

Ed Slaughter now took Jim Hicks and Wildey aside and told them he wanted the matter cleared up, as it had gotten on the nerves of his family.

But instead of promising Ed to clear up the matter, as soon as they left him they determined to get some neighbor of the Slaughters to worm the mystery of Jack's crime from the old woman.

CHAPTER V.—The Female Spy.

The fact that Tom Bussy was in the hospital with a broken head was soon known to every fireman in Salem. He belonged to No. 3, and a score of the members of that company called on him during the day. In the evening nearly the entire

company visited him. The surgeons in charge were forced to refuse admittance to all save one or two friends whom he had asked to see. The police investigated the matter, and utterly failed to find any clue to who threw the stones. Slaughter said that he had no cause to suspect any one, and, therefore, had no idea as to who the guilty parties were. But Hicks had told a half dozen of his comrades about the old woman and her mysterious secret.

"The stone-throwing has stopped it twice, you say?" one asked.

"Yes."

"Well, who but Jack or some of his friends have any interest in suppressing this thing?"

"That's what I would like to know."

"The way to find out is to have a watch on the outside on the next visit. That's as easy as catching a flea."

"But Slaughter forbids any more visits, and has told the old woman not to open her mouth again, except to eat or sing."

"The deuce he has!"

"Yes, so you see it is easier to catch the flea."

"We can set a watch on Jack to see if he goes down that way."

"Yes, and a watch on the house."

Hicks hired two detectives—one to watch Ed Slaughter's house, and the other to keep on the trail of Jack Nelson. They went to work at once, and lost no time.

Hicks paid a stealthy visit in the evening to a neighbor of the Slaughters, one with whom they were on intimate terms. He told her a plausible story about the object of the visit, and then said:

"She will not give the whole story to us. We are anxious to get hold of the real truth of the matter, and if you can and will worm the secret out of her we will pay you one hundred dollars in gold."

That settled it. The woman loved money above everything else in this world, and would do anything not actually degrading to get it.

"I'll do it," she said.

"When shall I call again?" Jim asked.

"Don't call any more. We would be suspected, because you have never called on us before. I'll run to see them in a day or two, and if I get anything out of her will meet you somewhere else."

"Send me a note where to meet you," said Jim, "and I'll be on hand. Here is my address," and he handed her his card and left the house.

"If Mrs. Dell can't get the secret out of her nobody can," commented Jim, as he made his way uptown toward his bachelor quarters.

Mrs. Dell was the name of the lady who was to find out the secret about Jack Nelson for those firemen who were anxious to ruin the daring young hero's reputation in order to force him out of the fire department. She was a very avaricious woman, but yet with a good reputation among her neighbors. The Slaughters had known her a long time—before their marriage—and liked her very much as a neighbor. She had often dropped in and spent an hour with them. The next day, in the afternoon, she dropped in, and found the old lady quite ill in bed. The excitement of the last visit of Tom Bussy and his companions had been too much for her. Mrs. Slaugh-

ter told her all about what had happened, but did not say a word about Jack Nelson. He had warned both her and the old woman about doing so.

"Who do you think threw the stones?" she asked.

"Oh, we have no idea," replied Mrs. Slaughter.

"I heard that Jack Nelson and some of his friends——"

"Oh, I don't believe Jack would do such a thing, though I have never even seen him," said Mrs. Slaughter, interrupting her.

"I was surprised myself when I heard of it. They say that he has been mixed up in some bad work over in Mayfield."

"Yes, I heard so, too, but that is none of our business."

"No. Strange that people will talk so about one who has so often risked his life to save others."

"Yes," and Mrs. Slaughter looked as if she would prefer to drop the subject.

Mrs. Dell returned to her home fully convinced that if she succeeded in worming the secret out of the old lady she would have to use considerable diplomacy in doing so. But she went bravely to work. She was not the woman to give anything up when once she started in pursuit of it. The second time she called she found the old lady seated in her old armchair before the fire, with her knitting in her hand.

"You are up, are you, Aunt Mag?" she exclaimed on entering the room.

"Yes, I'm up," she said. "I am poorly, though. I ought to be in bed."

"Why, Aunt Mag, you look as well as at any time in ten years."

The old lady looked up at her in a surprised sort of way, as if the remark was something she had not heard for years. She was one of those kind of old people who delighted in imagining themselves as being afflicted with no less than four-and-twenty different kinds of ailments at the same time. Yet she was as susceptible of flattery at seventy-five as she had been at twenty years of age. Mrs. Dell knew that peculiarity of female weakness, and said:

"It is astonishing how some people can keep up in their old age. Some people grow old before their time, and look to be one hundred when they are but sixty. With all your ill-health, Aunt Mag, you look ten or fifteen years younger than you really are. If my old age would serve me any worse, I would not fear it in the least."

The old lady smiled. The flattery had found lodgment in her breast, and a warm feeling toward Mrs. Dell at once sprang up in her heart.

Her knitting dropped in her lap, and she gazed at the glowing coals in the grate as if memory was wandering back to the long, long ago, when flattery from beaux and lovers had seemed so sweet to her. Mrs. Slaughter was busy with her household work in another part of the house, and so the visitor and the old lady were left to entertain each other. That was just what Mrs. Dell desired. In fact, she asked, as she noticed the old lady gazing at the glowing coals:

"Of what are you thinking, Aunt Mag?"

"I am thinking of the time when I was young like you and Elsie," she said.

"Oh, I am not young any more," said Mrs. Dell. "I am in my forties now, you know."

"Forty is young—the very prime of life," returned the old lady. "I was as young at forty or fifty as I was at twenty or thirty. I was sixty ere I began to feel old."

"And yet you do not look a whit over sixty now. But it must be very pleasant to sit and dream over the past. You have seen so much in your day, both good and bad, that you have plenty to think about. Which leaves the most lasting impression on your mind, Aunt Mag—the good or evil you have seen?"

The old lady thought over her answer nearly a minute ere she spoke:

"The veil—I think—if it carries crime with it. I don't think I shall ever forget the Nelson affair. It seems to prey upon my mind because it has gone on unpunished ever so long—because the world does not know of it."

"Why, what was that, Aunt Mag? I never heard anything of that. Why don't you tell the officers of the law if you know of a wrong that has been done?"

"Yes, yes! I ought to do that—I ought to do that!" and she rocked herself to and fro several times, as if in some sort of mental distress or emotion.

Mrs. Dell actually suffered in her suspense, so eager was she to hear the few words of a secret that would drop one hundred dollars into her lap.

"You knew the Nelsons and all that was done, did you not?" she asked.

"Yes, I know all," she answered. "It's a black crime—a shame that one child should be robbed of his inheritance at the same time that a cruel murder robbed another of his life. I shall never forget the night when they——"

Bang! The house shook, and Mrs. Dell and Mrs. Slaughter screamed at the top of their voices, and ran out into the street, while the old lady sank back in her capacious armchair with a ghastly look on her wrinkled old face.

CHAPTER VI.—The Third Failure and Another Fire.

To say that the women were frightened would be but a mild expression. They were panic-stricken. It was in the middle of the day, when the sun was shining brightly, and men, women, and children were passing to and fro along the street. The stone was as large as a boy's head, and had struck the house with such force as to jar it to its foundation. The neighbors heard it in their houses, and ran out to see about it. Some boys were playing in the street. They heard the blow and saw the stone roll on the ground after it struck the house, but did not see anybody hurl it—nor any one who was really able to throw such a heavy missile. A crowd soon collected, and a boy ran across town to the shop where Ed Slaughter was employed to tell him about it. He came home immediately and asked his wife who had been there.

"No one but Mrs. Dell," she said. "She was talking to grandma in the front room while I

was working in the dining-room, and the first thing I knew the shock came as if the house was coming down about our heads."

"The old woman was talking about Jack Nelson," he said. "I told her to keep her mouth shut about that. If this thing happens again I'll bundle her off to the poorhouse. I'm not going to have my house battered down just because a garrulous old woman can't keep her mouth shut."

He spoke harshly, angrily, and Elsie burst into tears. Ed went into the old lady's room, and found her in bed, completely prostrated.

"You are bound to tell your secret or have the house knocked down about our heads, are you?" he said. "I warned you the other day. Now, if this thing occurs again you'll go to the poorhouse. I don't care to have my home knocked over just because you can't hold your tongue."

The old lady was too much prostrated to really understand what he said. She was quite superstitious, and now a terrible fear had suddenly come upon her.

After a while Ed went to his wife, whom he dearly loved, and putting an arm around her neck in his old loving way, said:

"I did not mean to speak harshly to you, Elsie. I was angry, but not with you. She will get us into trouble with her talking if we don't guard her that way."

"I never thought she would say a word more after what you said to her the other day, and I never dreamed that anybody would dare stone the house in broad daylight."

"Of course not. But look out hereafter, and don't let any one have a chance to talk to her. She is frightened nearly to death now."

"Poor old soul! I am sorry for her. She didn't mean any harm."

"No, but a loose tongue can make as much mischief in a neighborhood as any mad dog can."

He went back to his work, and the news went all over that part of the town that the Slaughter cottage had again been stoned in mid-day, and no one could find out the perpetrators of the outrage. A dozen neighbors visited Mrs. Dell to hear what she had to say about it. She held regular levees every day for a week, but was shrewd enough not to say a word about Jack Nelson.

Hicks and Wildey had warned her not to mention the name to any one. They were the worst puzzled men in the town. That the ponderous stones should strike the house just as the old woman was on the eve of revealing the terrible secret they were in search of staggered them.

"I don't understand it at all," said Hicks, shaking his head.

"Nor do I," returned Wildey, "but I am sure that we'll get at the bottom of it after a while. There's somebody around there all the time to watch the old woman and throw a stone to give her a nervous start, and thus break up the conversation. A good detective will unearth all that."

"Yes, I hope so. I say, Wildey, I've just heard that old Harper gave Jack a gold medal to-day and a thousand dollars in gold for saving his life."

"I heard so this afternoon," returned Wildey.

"I can't blame him for that, as Jack did save his life."

"Yes, of course, but some other fireman would have done the same thing had he not got in ahead of him."

"No doubt of it, but he gets the credit, and we honest firemen have to suffer in comparison with him."

A day or two later Hicks met Mrs. Dell by appointment, to hear her report of her two attempts to get at the old lady's secret.

"She had begun to tell me," she said. "when a stone came against the house with such force as to nearly frighten my life out of me. I ran home and have not been back there since."

"You need not go back, Mrs. Dell. Here's ten dollars for your trouble. We have given up the idea of trying to get the secret out of her."

Mrs. Dell took the ten dollars, and mentally resolved to get that secret out of old Mag Mullins, if it sent a whole rock quarry flying through the air. A few nights later the slumbers of the good people of Salem were broken by the ringing of the great fire-bell. Firemen sprang out of their beds and dressed faster than they did before in their lives, and hastened to their respective company quarters. The whole south end of Salem was lit up by the conflagration, and as the fire companies went flying along the streets windows were raised, and night-capped heads peered out at the red glare.

Away they went, the Salem Boys at the top of their speed, cheered on by such of the young people who had come from their beds to witness the fire. As they turned into another street they came abreast of No. 3, and the race became fast and furious. The latter company's quarters were at least a half-mile nearer the fire than the Salem Boys, yet the boys were now abreast of them in the race.

"Fly, boys, fly!" called Jack through his trumpet.

"Shove ahead, men!" sung out the foreman of No. 3.

But it was impossible to "shove ahead" of those nimble-footed boys, and so they reached the fire at the same instant. Jack secured the best position, and the others rushed forward to oust him, and in a moment a terrible hand-to-hand struggle was going on.

In a moment there was a fight on hand. Foreman Wright struck Jack with his trumpet and Jack felled Wright with a broken head. In the meantime the fire was gaining headway while the free-for-all fight was going on and it took all night to subdue the flames after things quieted down and the firemen got to work in real earnest. Then it was to find, when Salem No. 3 got back to the firehouse, that they were under arrest for attacking the boy fireman. Jack and his boys were in court to answer the judge's questions, and the trial finally ended in all the firemen being fined one dollar each for unruly conduct. Old John Harper paid the fine for the boys volunteers, and they returned to their homes.

CHAPTER VII.—The Conspirators at Work.

The evening following the incidents related in the previous chapter found Henry Wildey and

Jim Hicks with two detectives, closeted in a room. They were engaged in earnest conversation over the young hero of the fire department of the town. Jim Hicks was fond of turmoil and intrigue. He had no personal quarrel with Jack Nelson. His own company hated the young hero, and that was enough for him to know. But the case was different with Wildey. His was a personal quarrel. Jack Nelson had thrashed him on the public street, and he had sworn to ruin him at any cost. He had hired two detectives to trail him—one to relieve the other—and, if possible, to get at the secret which old Mag Mullins held. They were working for pay at so much a week, with the promise of a big bonus if they succeeded in bringing down the game.

"I don't know how we are going to get at that old woman's secret," said Nick Bell, one of the detectives. "She is too old to go out on the street alone, and I understand that Ed's wife has positive orders from him not to let any visitors get at her."

"Yes—I heard as much myself," said Hicks.

"So you see," continued Nick, "what we have to contend against?"

"I hired you to get over or around all such obstacles," said Wildey, "and it's in your line, you know."

"Yes—and we'll do our best. But look here, Wildey. Do you have any idea where those big stones came from?"

"No, not the least idea."

"Well, there's more of a mystery about that than you think. I don't believe any man threw them."

"The deuce you don't!"

"It was a woman, then, eh?"

"I didn't say so."

The other three stared at Bell in amazement.

"Was it a horse, mule or dog?" Wildey asked.

"Oh, maybe the stones just jumped up against the house by themselves."

The other burst into a loud laugh.

"I say, Bell," said Hicks, "you are away off. What have you been drinking to-day?"

"Water, straight," replied Bell. "You fellows have such thick skulls that it takes an idea a week to get through to your brain. In about a year you will begin to develop just a little sense and see things differently."

"What in thunder are you driving at, anyhow?" Hicks asked.

"I am trying to make you fellows understand that no human agency threw those stones against——"

Again a roar of laughter came from the other three. But Bell remained as quiet as an undertaker.

"Have you fellows got through with your laugh?" he asked.

They laughed again and Hicks said, wiping his eyes:

"Don't make me laugh any more."

"Poor fellow," remarked Bell, sarcastically. "Your little brain can't stand too much at once."

"Do you want to butt heads with me?" Hicks asked.

"No. I don't care to beat my brains out against an empty bone box."

"Bone box is good," said Hicks, laughing good-

naturedly. "Go on with your theory, and tell us what it is?"

"I won't do it, but I'll take you down there some night, and let you see for yourself what it is. Just give me authority to pay for that secret, and I'll see if we can't get at it."

"I am willing to pay for it, but I want to know how the money goes," said Wildey.

"Of course. I think that either Ed Slaughter or his wife if approached in the right way, would get the secret for us."

Wildey scratched his head reflectively for a moment or two, and remarked:

"Yes. I never thought of that. Has Mrs. Dell given it up?"

"I think she has. She received such a fright the other day that I don't believe any amount of money could get her to attempt it again."

"Well, you'll have to be very careful how you approach Slaughter. I think that if he thought a man was trying to bribe him he'd knock him down without a moment's hesitation."

"I am not so sure of that," said Hicks. "He is a great friend of Tom Bussy's, and if he could be made to believe that Jack Nelson was at the bottom of Tom's broken head, he'd do anything to avenge him."

"Yet he'd break the head of the man who offered him money to do so."

"I am not so sure of that, either. Ed works hard for his living, and doesn't make a very good living, either. His wife is fond of dress and company, and has to economize in numberless little ways to save money enough to buy such dresses as she has."

"You seem to know a great deal about them," remarked Wildey.

"Yes—Mrs. Dell posted me about them."

"Couldn't Mrs. Dell work the racket with Mrs. Slaughter?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Then see her again."

The conference broke up at a late hour, and the men went in the direction of their homes. On his way up the street Hicks met Jack Nelson, who was escorting Myrtis Banning home from a party. They both recognized him and spoke to him, and then passed on.

"The young rascal!" hissed Hicks, as he stopped and looked back at him. "He has the favor of all the pretty girls in town because of his daring and good looks. That's the girl that set him on Wildey. Hanged if I don't follow them just to see if they do go straight to her home," and he turned and shadowed them through a dozen blocks till they reached the home of the young girl.

He saw them part at the door, and actually heard the sweet voice of Myrtis say:

"Good-night, Jack. I am ever so much obliged to you for the pleasures of this evening."

"Do you know, Myrtis," said Jack, "that I enjoy myself better with you than with any other girl in town?"

"Is that so? Well, I am so glad to hear it! I shall always try to make you enjoy yourself whenever you call."

Thus they parted, and Jack turned to leave. As he walked away he caught sight of the shadow and made direct for him. Not wishing to be discovered, Hicks took to his heels. Jack bounded

after him like a deer, and the race up the street at a late hour attracted the attention of the policeman on the beat.

CHAPTER VIII.—The Shadow Caught.

When Jack saw the policeman, he called out lustily:

"Stop that man!"

That was enough. The officer, thinking him a burglar or pickpocket, or something equally bad, bounded after him at the top of his speed. That made Hick's hair stand on end! He didn't want to be caught and exposed, and yet, unless he outran the officer, he would have to surrender and face the music. Half a dozen blocks away another policeman joined in the chase—a hot-headed, burly fellow, who called out:

"Stop now, or I'll fire!"

"Good Lord!"

Hicks fairly flew along the street. Crack went a revolver, and a bullet whistled uncomfortably close to Hicks' head.

"Halt, I say, or down you go!" called the officer.

"Don't shoot!" cried Hicks, seeing that his life would probably pay the penalty if he did not stop.

The two officers came up to him, almost out of breath, and seized him.

"Who are you?" one of them asked.

"My name is Hicks."

"What have you been doing?"

"Nothing."

"Oh, yes—that's what they all say."

Just then Jack came up.

"There's a man who knows me," said Hicks, turning to Jack.

"Do you know this man?" the officer asked.

"Why, hello, Hicks!" exclaimed Jack, on recognizing the man. "Yes. I know him. He belongs to No. 3 fire company, and is a good fireman."

"What's he been up to?"

"Hanged if I know," replied Jack. "I thought I saw somebody shadowing me as I was escorting a young lady home from a party. When I left her at her door I made for the shadow, and he took to his heels."

"Is this the man?"

"Yes. And now, Hicks, what's your little racket?"

"Blow my buttons off if I haven't a great mind to club his head off for making me run half a mile to catch him!" growled one of the officers.

"Yes," said the other. "Club him anyway, for spite!"

"I am not to blame for your running after me," said Hicks. "Jack Nelson told you to stop me, and by that you took me for a thief or something else bad, and gave chase."

"So you are Jack Nelson, are you?" one asked, turning to Jack.

"Yes, that's my name."

"Well, what are you going to do about this?"

"I am going to apologize to you for the trouble I gave you, and then ask him to explain why he was shadowing me."

"I wasn't shadowing you," said Hicks.

"But you were," replied Jack, firmly. "I met

you half a mile away from the spot where I saw you the second time. You followed us. If you don't explain that to my satisfaction I'll thrash you right here, or else you'll give me a good drubbing."

"I guess I'll give you the drubbing," said Hicks, who was confident that the officers would not permit a fight."

"Oh, you will, eh? Officers, please go back to your posts and leave us alone just five minutes!"

"Oh, we can't permit a fight, you know," said the officers.

"But you want to have him thrashed, and so do I, and if you will just give me a chance I'll raise him out of his boots."

"No scrub like you can do that," remarked Hicks.

No sooner had the words escaped his lips than down he went. Jack had dealt him one between the eyes. He saw more stars than ever before in all his life.

"You should not have done that," remarked the officer nearest him.

"Don't say a word," said Jack, softly, "and we'll have some fun."

Hicks arose and glared at the young hero.

"Did you hit me?" he asked.

"No," said Jack. "It was the cat."

The officers chuckled. Hicks aimed a blow at Jack in which he threw all his strength. He was much heavier and stronger than Jack, but the young hero was well up in the science of sparring. Nimbly parrying the blow, he planted another on Hicks' eye and laid him out again at full length on his back.

"Now you didn't see that, you know," said Jack, chuckling, "and you have your satisfaction. He won't dare say a word for fear of giving himself dead away."

The officers chuckled, and understood the situation at a glance. They had no objection to having the other man punished for the race he had given them. Hicks came up the third time and reached for his revolver. Then the officers grabbed him.

"No shooting," said one.

"I'll kill 'im!" hissed Hicks.

"Maybe I'll kill you!" said Jack. "Stand him off there, officer, and get out of the way."

"Send him away if you don't want to see murder right here."

Jack chuckled.

"Send us both away—in the same direction," he said.

"You go on up the street, Nelson," said the officer, turning to Jack.

"All right. Send him down the street. He'll come round the block and we'll meet on the corner. I'll wait for you there, Jim Hicks."

Jack turned away and walked briskly toward the corner, and in few moments had disappeared round the corner.

"Now you be off!" the officer said to Hicks, and he went away in the opposite direction.

Jack stopped on the corner to see if Hicks would meet him there. In a few minutes he was surprised to see a dark form creeping toward him under the shadow of the houses. He was unable to make out whether it was Hicks or not. But he had asked the latter to meet him there,

and he was not the man to retreat from his own challenge. Instead of standing there, where he would be a fair target for his enemy, he resolved to meet him in the shadows on an equality. The next moment he was creeping forward to meet the dark form of the creeping foe.

CHAPTER IX.—The Battle in the Dark.

As the two men crept forward under the dark shadows of the buildings, they could hear their own hearts beat. But the bitter hate that moved them made them reckless of the danger that menaced them. Hicks, smarting under the stinging blows he had received, was utterly reckless, and was not in a frame of mind to be cool and cautious. On the contrary, Jack was naturally cool in the presence of danger. On, on they crept in the dark shadows, and in a little while they were within ten feet of each other. Jack then squeezed himself behind a column to wait for his enemy. Hicks had lost sight of him, and stopped to look for him. Jack understood the delay, and waited in patience for him. By and by, as if half suspicious that Jack had given him the slip and left the locality, Hicks moved forward right up to the column, which he passed without seeing Jack. Jack stepped out, leveled his revolver at him, and called out to him, sternly:

"Drop it!"

Hick was almost paralyzed. He wheeled round, to find the muzzle of Jack's revolver within two feet of his breast.

Down went the revolver on the stone pavement.

"Back off a few paces. Now I'll give you the thrashing you deserve," said Jack, making a dash for the fireman.

Being the stronger of the two, Hicks strove to get him in his grasp. Jack saw his game, and rained blow after blow on his face, as he leaned nimbly about, to avoid being caught. In a few minutes he found that Hicks was groping about like a blind man. Both eyes were closed.

"Enough!" called the villain at last, in tones that left no doubt on our hero's mind that death was almost preferable to surrender.

"Your eyes are closed," said Jack. "You can't find your way home. I'll lead you wherever you wish to go and say nothing about what has occurred."

"Take me to Mackin's drug store. But give me my weapon first," said Hicks.

"Oh, no! I'll send you your gun by messenger to-morrow. You know very well that you would think me the greatest fool that ever lived were I to give you your gun now. I don't want to kill you, nor do I care to be wiped out myself."

Jack took the weapon and put it in his pocket. Then he locked arms with him and led him two blocks away to Mackin's drug store. A young doctor, who was a friend of Hicks', lived upstairs over the drug store, and after the drug clerk had been called up, the doctor was called down.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the doctor, "what's the matter with you, Hicks?"

"I am knocked blind," said Hicks, "and want you to open my eyes just as quick as you can."

"You had better come upstairs to my rooms, then," said the doctor.

Jack carried, or rather led him up the stairs, where he said:

"I'll leave you with the doctor now."

"Yes—thank you, Jack. Leave my gun with him, too."

"All right; here it is, doctor. If it hadn't been for me he'd have killed a man to-night. He is a bad citizen when he gets mad."

The doctor took the weapon and laid it away, and then set himself to work to apply leeches to the swollen eyelids of the fireman. In a couple of hours Hicks could see a little out of both eyes.

"How did this happen, Jim?" the doctor asked.

"A fight," was the reply.

The doctor did not ask any more. He knew it would be of no use. Hicks remained in the doctor's room all the next day, and on the following evening repaired to his own quarters. He had not been ten minutes in his room when Henry Wildey called.

"Saints and sinners!" exclaimed Wildey, on seeing the terribly bruised face of the fireman, "what have you been up to, Hicks?"

"I've been to the front," was the reply.

"Yes, and was knocked to the rear in about one minute, were you not?"

"Hardly. It took 'em about ten minutes, I think," was the quiet reply.

"Who were they?"

"We have agreed to keep everything quiet till we can have another battle."

Wildey was perfectly wild with suppressed excitement.

"Were the Salem Boys engaged in it?" he asked.

"I won't break the pledge of perfect silence on the subject," he said.

"Well, hang me if this isn't the strangest thing I ever heard of in all my life! Here's a man nearly murdered who won't tell anything about his assailants."

"Oh, you will know all about it when the funerals take place."

Wildey paced the room and looked at the bruised and battered face of the young man, as if he would fain draw the information from him by main force. He was unused to such suspense, and could ill put up with it.

Wildey took up his hat and left the room, too much excited to stay any longer. He made direct for the engine house of No. 3, where he found a score of firemen congregated. There he told them of the condition in which he had left Hicks, and made the matter worse by saying, boldly:

"And he is so much intimidated that he dares not reveal the names of his assailants."

The firemen were greatly excited, and in less than a half hour over a score of them were on their way in a body to visit Jim Hicks.

CHAPTER X.—The Puzzle of the Firemen.

Jim was surprised when he saw so many of his brother firemen come into his room. Foreman Wright, who had been out of the hospital only two days, was the first to speak to him.

"How did this happen, Jim?" he asked.

"I had a fight."

"With whom?"

"That's my business."

"Won't you tell us who it was you fought with?"

"No."

The firemen were as much excited over it as Wildey had been, and fired questions at him by the score. But he would not answer any of them, nor would he admit that any of the Salem Boys had anything to do with it. They went away at a late hour, more puzzled than ever they had been before in their lives.

Of course, no secret could be kept under such circumstances, and the next day the report was all over the town that Jim Hicks, one of the members of No. 3, had been attacked and brutally beaten. Every one of the old firemen who repeated the story did so in such a way as to leave the impression that the Salem Boys firemen were the assailants. Before night came half a hundred men had dropped in to see Jack, and ask him about the affair.

"Does Jim say that any of our boys attacked him?" he asked.

"No, but it's the general impression that they did."

"Well, I'll parade our boys to-night and call the roll, and put the question to them."

"There's no use in doing that," said his employer. "If Jim will not say who they are, why should you bother about it?"

"I give myself very little bother about it," replied Jack. "But if anybody wants to see whether any of our boys have been in a fight, he can find out by seeing them at our engine-house to-night."

Such conflicting rumors flew about town that the two policemen who had met the two firemen on the night of the fight were amazed at what they heard. They knew that Jack had knocked Hicks down twice, but did not dream that they had met again.

"If they had," whispered one to the other, "there would have been more trouble."

"But I understand that Jack actually led him to the drug store, and gave him in chare of the physician," said the other.

"Oh, that can't be."

"But it's what I hear."

"I'll ask Mackin about it. I know him."

The officer called on Mackin, who told him that Jack did bring him there, but that neither one would tell anything about what had happened.

"Then Jack fixed him up that way," observed the officer, as he walked away.

That evening he called on Jack, and asked him about it.

"Are you going to arrest us?" Nelson asked.

"Oh, no, but having knowledge of the first meeting, I am naturally anxious to know all about the second."

"You won't give it away?"

"No."

"Well, he came around that corner. I made him drop his gun, and then we had it out right there. I am the chicken that did the mischief. When he cried enough I led him, blind as a bat, to the drug store, and left him there. We agreed to say nothing about it."

"Well, I'm blest!" exclaimed the officer, in amazement, after he had heard the whole story.

The officer went back and told his comrade what he had learned of the affair. In the meantime, Nick Bell, the detective, had been to see Mrs. Dell to make her an offer to try to bribe Mrs. Slaughter to get the secret out of her grandmother. Mrs. Dell listened to all he said, and then remarked:

"I think that if I had the money to show her she would jump at it like a cat pouncing on a mouse."

"I'll bring you the money this evening—one hundred dollars," said Bell.

"Very well; and I'll see her to-morrow morning. If she does not take it I'll return it to you."

"Yes, and if she gets the secret you can have the like amount for yourself."

"Of course—that's understood."

That evening the money was put into her hands by the detective. The next day she sent over for Mrs. Slaughter, who came in a few minutes later.

"Look here, Elsie," said Mrs. Dell, "you know that certain men are quite anxious to get hold of that secret your grandmother holds."

"Yes, I do."

"Well, do you know what it is?"

"No, I don't. Why do you ask?"

"Because, if you do, you can get one hundred dollars of good money for it."

Mrs. Slaughter looked upon one hundred dollars as a fortune. She had probably never seen that much money in all her life at one time.

"Who'll give me that much for the secret?" she asked.

"The money has been placed in my hands for you," said Mrs. Dell, and she showed her the roll of bills. Elsie's eyes opened wide as she gazed at the money.

"Oh, I'll get it out of her if I die for it," she exclaimed, springing up and starting to leave the house.

That evening Bell was told the result of the negotiation with Ed Slaughter's wife, and he immediately informed Wildey and the other detective.

"Let the women work it," said Wildey, "and then call on Mrs. Dell for the story."

Two days later Bell called and found the fair widow so nervous she could scarcely speak.

"Oh, sir, such dreadful things have happened since you were here," she said, wringing her hands. "I don't know what to think about it."

"Well, tell me all about it," said Bell, "and then I may perhaps be able to tell you what to think about it."

"Elsie said she would get the secret from her grandmother," she continued, "and went to work at it to-day. She led the old lady on to talking about the case. Just as she was about to tell of some terrible crime that had been committed by Jack Nelson in Mayfield, a stone as large as your head crashed against the house with such force as to break the outside boards, and knock the plastering from the wall on the inside."

The detective was too much surprised to make any reply to what had been said for some minutes after Mrs. Dell had finished her story.

"What do you think about it?" she asked.

"Why, that somebody threw the stone, of course."

"But there was no one in the street at the time, for I was at my window when the stone struck the house. I saw it roll on the ground, but there was nobody on the block at that moment. Of that I am quite positive."

"Well, I'll see you again in a day or two."

And Bell left the house. That evening Ed Slaughter vowed he would send the old woman to the poorhouse. Elsie told Mrs. Dell about it. She sent word to Bell. Bell told Wildey and the others.

"Let him do so. We must contrive to abduct her, and keep her in our power till we get the secret out of her."

"Yes, that's so. I'll see Ed, ascertain if he is really going to send her away, and suggest the Old Woman's Home."

"Do so."

That evening he called on Ed.

"Yes, I am going to send her away as soon as I can get time to attend to it."

"Why not send her to the Old Woman's Home? It wouldn't look quite so bad for you there."

"But can she get in there?"

"I think I can get a permit for her to enter there, as I have a brother who is one of the physicians of the Home."

"If you get it you will place me under great obligations," said Slaughter, "as I would not like to send her to the poorhouse if it can be avoided. But rather than keep her here I would do so. If she causes the poorhouse to be knocked down, all right. The country is better able to stand that than I am."

They parted. Bell reported to his mates, and the matter was arranged. A carriage was to be provided and everything in readiness for the abduction. The next day a bogus permit was made out to admit Maggie Mullins, aged seventy-five years, to the Old Woman's Home, and signed with the names of the proper ones. Bell carried it to Ed Slaughter that evening and showed it to him.

"The Home will send a carriage for her at two p. m. to-morrow."

"She'll be ready at that time."

When the carriage came, Bell was inside, disguised as an elderly female, and in a few minutes the old lady was driven off with him.

CHAPTER XI.—The Abductors Foiled.

Elsie Slaughter was loth to part with her grandmother. She loved the dear old lady very much, but the wishes of her husband were law in all things. She wept like a child as she kissed the dear old lady, and avowed that she would call at the Old Woman's Home every week to see her. The old woman was dazed at thus being turned over to a charitable institution in her old age, and that, too, by her own kith and kin. On the way from the home of the Slaughter cottage she was silent for a while, thinking about going among strangers to live, and wondering if she was to remain there to the end.

The sedate looking woman by her side did not attempt to disturb her thoughts until the car-

riage had been going nearly a half hour. Old Mag Mullins did not dream that her companion was a man in disguise. On the contrary, she believed that he was one of the matrons of the home to which she was going.

"You are sad at parting with your granddaughter?" remarked Bell, the bogus female.

"Yes, I have been with her a long time," was the reply.

"You will like the Home much better than you imagine, as you will have comfortable quarters, plenty to eat and drink, and all the day long to read and talk. When one has been there a month she could not be persuaded to leave, on account of the strong friendship formed there—the peace and quietude of the place and interest each takes in the other."

"I am glad to hear that," said the old lady.

"Yes, one can sit all day long and talk of the past without anybody interfering to make mischief. Mr. Slaughter seemed to want to get rid of you on account of you talking so much. Now, I think it a shame than an old lady can't be allowed to talk as much as she pleases, and in her home, too, without somebody making mischief out of it."

"Yes—yes!" and old Mag at once become interested, for she had a very bitter feeling in her heart against Ed Slaughter for sending her away. "Just because I answered questions that were asked me somebody would throw stones against the house and raise a big fuss about nothing."

"Why have not the guilty ones been punished?"

"Because they have too much money. They paid those who knew about it to keep their mouths shut."

"But they have not paid you, have they?"

"No, indeed. They don't know how much I know, nor how I got hold of it."

"How did you get hold of the secret, Mrs. Mullins?"

"One who died in my arms told me about it on her deathbed."

"Did she leave any proof of the truth of her story?"

"Oh, the truth can be easily found if they only look in the right place for it."

Here a stone crashed through the glass of both windows of the carriage, and fell in the bushes on the left-hand side of the road.

"Whoa! Whoa!" yelled the driver, tugging at the reins with all his might. The animals reared and plunged as if they would run away and smash things generally. But he managed to hold them in hand, and just as he succeeded in bringing them to a standstill, Bell, though dressed as a female, sprang out of the carriage, revolver in hand, and looked wildly around for the thrower of the stone.

"It came out of that clump of bushes back there!" cried the driver, who was the other detective employed in the case.

Bell dashed toward the clump of bushes, and in a minute or so was lost to sight. The moment he entered the bushes, however, he heard someone running toward the woods beyond. He gave chase with grim determination, and soon caught sight of two men running at the top of their speed. He raised his revolver and took deliberate

aim at one of them and fired. The man gave a howl and stopped. The other kept on.

"Stop or you die!" cried Bell.

"Don't shoot!" called out the other man.

"Stop, then—hold up your hands!"

The man held up both hands above his head until Bell came up to him.

"So I have you at last!" exclaimed Bell.

The wounded man groaned:

"You have done for me!"

"Oh, I guess not," said Bell. "Where are you hit?"

"In the back," and the man laid down on the half-covered ground, and groaned as if in the greatest pain.

"Well, I am sorry, yet glad that we have dropped on you two. You have puzzled us for a good while. How did you manage to work it so long without being caught?"

"We are private detectives and know how to work on the quiet," replied the man, who was still holding up his hands above his head.

"What's it all about, anyhow?"

"Well, we ain't giving the thing away."

"Well, I'll give you two over to the sheriff. Maybe that will be giving some things away."

"Drop it where it is, and we'll give you the snap and go away," said the man with his hands up.

"Out with it, then!" cried Bell.

"You'll let us go?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, a short time ago a man came to us in New York and said his daughter—Mrs. Elsie Slaughter—had been hinting about a secret lately which very much disturbed a friend of his."

"Hold on! Who was that man?"

"I don't know. He wouldn't give me any name, but laid down a sum of money and a lot of instructions for us to follow. He engaged us to see that the old woman did not tell the secret to anybody, and if she could not be prevented from doing so to abduct her, and take her to some place of concealment, and keep her till we heard from him again. We came to Salem, found her, and soon got the lay of the whole thing——"

"Except the secret?"

"Yes, except the secret. We found that she was very superstitious, believing in spirits and all that sort of thing. One or both of us kept up such a watch on the house that nothing was said or done there which we did not either hear or see. Just at the time she was about to give the story away we had to throw a big stone against the house to give her a scare. She was too superstitious to try to tell it again till she got over the scare. We dropped on you fellows and found out your game, and——"

"Well, I must say you are good detectives," said Bell, "for you have puzzled us more than ever we were before, and you have so far succeeded in keeping us from getting at the old woman's secret. You may go, but if you get in our way again you are goners. Is your friend much hurt?"

"I don't know; we'll see."

The other man simply had a bullet in his shoulder, instead of his back, which made an exceedingly painful though not dangerous wound.

"You can walk back to town and take the train

for New York," said Bell, "and that's the best thing for you to do."

When Bell went back to the carriage he found the driver waiting patiently for him, and the old lady in a dead swoon from which they could not recall her.

"This is a deuce of a muss," he said.

"Yes, so it is. Did you see anybody?"

"Yes, two men. They have been doing all that stone business. I gave one a bullet, and then got the story from 'em."

"Good! What's to be done now?"

"Nothing. The old woman is in a dead faint. We'll have to carry her back to Slaughter's house, and tell him the Home wouldn't receive her after they had heard of the stone-throwing business."

"Yes, that's so," and they proceeded to return to the Slaughter cottage.

When the carriage drove up to her door again, Mrs. Slaughter was most agreeably surprised.

"Why, what's the matter?" she exclaimed. "Oh, grandma, you have come home again!"

The old woman had partially recovered, but was in such a terrified condition that she scarcely knew what was said to her. She was hurried into the house, where it was explained to Elsie that the Home, at the last moment, had refused to receive her on account of the stone-throwing business.

"You see that a stone struck the carriage and almost destroyed it."

Elsie looked at the carriage in dumfounded amazement, and then said:

"I know that my husband will be very much disappointed, but I think I can prevent any recurrence of that business."

But the neighbors had seen the old lady leave, and also the return, as well as noticed the wrecked condition of the carriage. They came flocking in to hear the news. In a few moments it was known that a flying stone had nearly destroyed the carriage, and that the Old Woman's Home had refused to receive the old lady in consequence. Many of them crossed themselves and expressed the opinion that the Evil One had something to do with the thing, and made haste to get away from the house. That evening, when Ed Slaughter returned home, he was surprised at finding the old lady still there.

"The Home will not receive her," said his wife.

"What! After granting a permit to her?"

"Yes, but don't worry, dear. I'll see that no one gets a chance to talk to her hereafter."

"Well, we'll see," and he sat down to think about the mystery of the old woman's secret.

In the meantime Jack knew somebody had started some ugly stories about him. It also began to leak out that it was Jack who had done Jim Hicks up. Just at this time the mayor's house took fire. Jack rescued two of the mayor's children. He also took the mayor's daughter down the ladder and just as the young girl was taken out of his grasp Jack was knocked down as if by a thunderbolt. The Salem boys rushed over to him and in a moment had the unconscious form of the boy fireman in their arms. No one seemed to know what was the matter. But at the hospital where he was taken Jack recovered and said he had been assailed by members of No. 3 for using their lad-

der in bringing the mayor's daughter from the burning house.

CHAPTER XII.—Old May Sends for Jack.

The news of Jack's version of the attack on him spread like wildfire over the town. People became very much excited over it. The mayor and chief of the fire department went to the hospital to see him. He repeated his story.

"I came down their ladder," he said, "with the girl in my arms, feeling as well as I ever did in my life, and when I reached bottom somebody took her from me. The next moment I received a blow on my head from behind that laid me senseless at the foot of the ladder. Then I felt 'em walking all over me, as if a whole troop of cavalry was passing."

"Who struck you?" the mayor asked.

"I don't know. I was struck from behind. But I do know that I was completely surrounded by No. 3 men."

The mayor and chief of the fire department sent for the foreman of the company to show cause why his company should not be suspended from further duty till the guilty ones were caught and punished. Wright came, and swore that he knew nothing about the matter; that he did not believe that Jack had received any injury from the members of No. 3.

"That won't do," said the mayor, shaking his head. "A thousand people saw him descend your ladder into the very midst of your crowd. The next moment he is beaten down and trampled under foot. It is the most disgraceful and cowardly act I ever heard of. No. 3 is suspended from duty and membership in the fire department until this matter is cleared up."

It was a terrible blow to No. 3. The disgrace they had sought to put upon Jack had fallen upon their own heads. They made all sorts of protests, but in vain. The mayor and fire chief were inexorable, and the public suspension of the entire company was announced. Jack was laid up for four days in the hospital, during which time Myrtis Banning came there to see him.

"Jack," she said, "I am going away for a few days, and bring you these flowers to remember me to you while I am away."

"Thanks, Myrtis," he said. "I hope you don't think I could forget you."

"Oh, I don't know, Jack," she replied. "The flowers will not let you forget me, though."

She went away, and that evening took the train for Mayfield. Myrtis went on a secret mission with the consent of her parents, who had relatives in Mayfield with whom she could stop while there. When Jack came out of the hospital the boys gave him a reception, at which hundreds of the best ladies and gentlemen of Salem danced. The members of No. 3, however, were more bitter than ever, and vowed that they would show him up in colors that would make the people of Salem sick of him. A week later another alarm of fire was given, and Jack and his boys sped away like young heroes for the post of danger.

This time the fire was in the Slaughter cottage. Mr. and Mrs. Slaughter had managed to save themselves with nothing but their night-clothes

on. Old Mag Mullins had fallen to the floor, overcome by the smoke. Jack found her lying on the floor, and soon had her in his arms and descending the ladder with her. She was taken into a neighbor's house in an unconscious condition, and the family physician was summoned. He administered to her several hours without restoring consciousness.

"She may have received some internal injury which consciousness only can reveal," he said.

Jack and his brave boys worked hard to save the cottage. But the most of it was destroyed, together with nearly all the contents. It was a hard blow to Ed Slaughter, who was a hard-working mechanic. The very next day the Salem Boys chipped in and subscribed one dollar each to a fund for his benefit. That started a subscription that swelled to over a thousand dollars in two days—twice the worth of the furniture that had been destroyed. They at once sought another house, and in a week's time had settled down as comfortably as they had ever been. The old lady was not able to talk any for nearly two weeks, when one day she asked Elsie about the fire. Elsie told her all she knew about it, how brave Jack Nelson had saved her life at the risk of his own.

"Did Jack save me?" she asked.

"Yes—it was Jack."

The old woman buried her thin old face in her hands for a minute or two, and then said:

"Send for him—tell him I must see him at once."

Elsie sent for Jack posthaste. He came with Billy Malone. Elsie led him into the room, and said:

"Grandma, here is Jack Nelson, who saved your life."

She turned and gazed at him.

"Oh, no, no!" she cried. "He is not Jack! He is not Jack!"

CHAPTER XIII.—Jack Faces Old Mag Mullins.

The sudden exclamation of the old lady that the gallant young fireman was not Jack Nelson caused a decided sensation among those around her bed. She glanced at Jack, and Jack gazed at her like one in a dream.

"Did you ever see her before?" one asked of Jack.

"Yes," he replied. "I remember having seen her several years ago in the town of Mayfield, but she has changed a great deal since then," and he looked at the old woman with intense interest.

"You say he is not Jack Nelson?" she was asked.

"Yes, I do say that. The Jack Nelson I have been speaking of is old enough to be this young man's father," and the old lady gazed at him with a nervous interest that puzzled both him and the others present.

"Oh," said Jack, "you speak of John Nelson, the rich property owner of Mayfield, do you not?"

"Yes—but I always called him Jack."

"I am not even a relative of his."

"No—you—are—not—even—Jack Nelson," said

the old lady, in jerky sentences that indicated great nervous alarm.

"What! I am not Jack Nelson?"

"No—you are not."

"Who am I, then?"

The old woman looked terribly frightened, and seemed afraid to answer the question.

"Who am I, then?" Jack repeated.

"Oh, my God, the stones will fly again if I answer you."

"By the great stone mountain!" cried Jack, "I want to understand this thing, even though all the stones in Salem take wings and fly. I am the son of Sarah Nelson, now dead, or I am not. Which is the truth?"

"You are not her son!" said the old lady, white as a sheet.

"Who am I, then?"

She hesitated. A look of terror came into her eyes.

"Send for Ed, Elsie," she finally said, turning to her grand-daughter.

Elsie sent a little boy, the son of a neighbor, to tell her husband to come home immediately. An hour later he arrived.

"What's the trouble here?" he asked of Elsie, after seeing so many others in the house.

"When grandma was told that Jack Nelson had saved her life," Elsie said, "she asked me to send for him right away, and I did so. Jack came, and the moment she laid eyes on him she exclaimed:

"Why, you are not Jack Nelson!"

"The deuce she did!" ejaculated Ed.

"Yes, and then she told him that his name was something else, but is afraid to say more for fear the stones will fly again, and asked me to send for you, which I did."

"Well, what does she want with me?"

"I don't know."

He went in and saw the old lady, and asked:

"What is it now, grandma?"

The old lady turned to him and said:

"I have sent for the man who saved my life, expecting to see the Jack Nelson I knew in Mayfield. When he came I found him to be a mere boy—not Jack Nelson at all."

"Well, what of that? You have simply been making a mistake all along."

"Yes, but I owe this young man a debt of gratitude which I can only repay with your consent."

Ed was puzzled. He did not know what to make of her words.

"You have my consent to show your gratitude in any way you please," he said.

"I only want to tell him who he is and who has wronged him, but I am afraid the stones will fly if I do."

Ed was surprised. He looked around at the eager faces of the others, and then said:

"Let 'em fly, grandma."

The old woman was relieved, and said to him:

"I am glad, for it has been a burden on my mind. I didn't want to say anything more about it till you said so. I would not have thought much about it but for hearing the name of Jack Nelson so often spoken of as having saved the lives of people at fires. I asked somebody if Jack came from Mayfield, and I was told that he did. Then I began talking about what a bad man he

was, and when I started to tell of the crimes he had committed the stones struck the house. I had lived in a state of terror ever since. When they told me that Jack Nelson had saved my life I thought I would send for him and let him know that I knew his secret, and out of consideration for the saving of my life give him a chance to undo the wrong he had done without the world finding him out. When he came I was amazed at finding him another man altogether. But he is the one above all others most concerned in what I have to say. This young man here is not the real Jack Nelson. His real name is not Nelson at all, but Alphonse——"

At that moment the sound of a small pitcher of water falling to the floor in a corner of the room startled her. Elsie herself had brushed it off the table accidentally. But so nervous was the old woman that she gave a scream of terror and went off into a deathlike swoon.

"There she goes again!" cried Ed. "Throw water in her face and send for the doctor."

Elsie picked up the broken pitcher and ran into the kitchen, whence she soon returned with another one half full of water. She dashed water in the old lady's face, and someone ran in haste for the family physician. The doctor soon came, and, after hearing what had occurred, said she had swooned through nervousness, and that she would soon recover. They worked patiently to restore her, and some of the neighbors came in to render such assistance as they could. In a little while quite a party were gathered in the little cottage of the Slaughters.

CHAPTER XIV.—Myrtis Banning Goes On A Secret Mission.

Let us go back a week to the little town of Mayfield, of which frequent mention has been made in this story. Mayfield was some sixty miles distant from Salem, and quite a flourishing little town. On the south side of the town lived a family of the name of Welsh, in a beautiful white cottage. It consisted of husband and wife and a sixteen-year-old daughter. Mrs. Welsh was the sister of Mrs. Banning, of Salem, the mother of Myrtis, who had come to Mayfield without giving her any notice of her intention to do so. She folded her niece in her arms and kissed her, for she loved her sister's pet even as her own child. The two cousins loved each other as two sisters, and had no secrets from each other whenever they were together.

"Oh, Myrtis!" cried Fannie, "I am so glad you have come. I am going to a surprise party to-morrow night, and you must go with us. We'll have much fun."

"But I can't go, Fannie," replied Myrtis. "I came only for a few days, and did not bring even a change of clothes with me."

"You know that all my clothes fit you," said Fannie, "and you shall wear the best of them."

"I can't do that, for I don't want the boys and girls to know that I am here."

"Why not, pray?"

"Because I came here for a purpose, and when I have done what I came for I must hasten back home."

"Why, what in the world are you up to, Myrtis Banning?" exclaimed Fannie's mother, looking at her niece in an alarmed sort of way.

"Nothing wrong, aunt," replied Myrtis, very promptly. "Just write to mother, and ask her if she knows where I am and what I am here for."

"What are you here for?" Mrs. Welsh asked in true woman fashion.

"That I will tell you before I go home, but not now. You have confidence in me, aunt?"

"Why, yes, child! But whatever in the world does all this mean?"

"Just wait, aunt, and you shall know all."

"Is there a young man in it?"

"Don't ask any questions now, please, nor say a word to anybody about my being here."

Mrs. Welsh and her daughter were in a fever of curiosity about Myrtis' visit, but would not say any more about it till such time as she was ready to talk to them about it. In the evening, when John Welsh, her aunt's husband, came home, Myrtis took him into the parlor and had a long secret talk with him. When they had talked together for a half hour, Mrs. Welsh was called in and consulted. The result of the consultation was that a disguise was gotten up for Myrtis that night, which she assumed the next morning. It was the disguise of an old woman of a sort of poverty-stricken appearance—a faded dress, shawl, bonnet, shoes that had evidently been discarded by somebody else, and face and hands which seemed to have been long pledged against the use of water. In this disguise she left the Welsh cottage the next morning, followed by her uncle at a safe distance, who was not to lose sight of her or her locality. She wended her way down across the railroad track over among the poverty-stricken people in that region. The residents down there were not only very poor, but some of them very low and vicious in their habits and way of living. In front of one of the old tumbling shanties she saw a ragged child standing, looking lazily about.

"Can you tell me where Mrs. Branch lives?" she asked of the child.

"Yessum," said the child. "That's her ercomin' down ther street," and he pointed in the direction of a fat, ugly old woman, who was waddling along toward her.

Myrtis looked at the old hag and shuddered for a moment. Then she went resolutely forward to meet her.

"Are you Mrs. Branch?" she asked, when she met the old woman.

"Yes, that's my name," answered the old dame, eyeing our heroine suspiciously.

"I was told that you could help me find a house in this neighborhood which I could rent, live in, and let rooms to lodgers, and I was on my way to see you."

Mrs. Branch was on her way to the corner grocery to get a nip of gin, and the thought immediately occurred to her that she could get a drink or two for nothing out of the stranger.

"Yes, mum," she said. "I know everybody in Mayfield, an' every house, too. Would yer mind goin' ter ther grocery with me now, an' then I can tell yer all you want ter know."

"There's no need to go to the grocery, Mrs.

Branch. I am a respectable woman who always keeps something handy for use. If it's something for the stomach you want, I have it here in my pocket—some of the best gin you ever tasted."

"La, now! How did you know that, mum? I always keep some of the stuff in the house myself, an' I was just goin' ter tell Moloney ter send me over a gallon of his best gin. Come ter my house, mum, an' welcome to yer, an' then I'll see if I can't find yer the house yer want."

Mrs. Branch turned and led the way back to the tumble-down shanty which she called "my house," and Myrtis followed her. The shanty was an exemplification of poverty and wretchedness. The woman was strong and hearty, and could well have supported herself decently, not to say respectably, had she not been addicted to drinking intoxicants. The furniture in the shanty was of the simplest kind, and as old as the mistress herself. Everything not of absolute necessity had been pawned for drink, and the cupboard was as bare of food as the floor was of carpet.

"Take a seat, mum," said Mrs. Branch. "Take a seat an' make yerself ter home. I'm sorry, but I had a party of friends ter see me last night who ate up all the roast I had yesterday, so I can't offer yer nothin' till I go ter ther butcher."

"Don't worry about that, Mrs. Branch," said our heroine. "I am not hungry, and when I am I can pay for a meal for both of us."

"Ah, yer talk like ther true woman yer is, mum," said Mrs. Branch, as she saw her visitor draw a black flask from the capacious pocket of her faded old dress.

"Taste of that, Mrs. Branch," said the visitor, as she handed her the bottle, "and tell me if you ever tasted better stuff in all your life."

Mrs. Branch turned up the bottle and took a long, strong pull with closed eyes and great suction power.

"Ah! such gin!" she ejaculated, as she lowered the bottle and smacked her lips. "It's ther best I ever tasted in my life, an' I have had ther best in my day, mum."

"Yes, it's the very best," said our heroine. "I have a brother in the liquor business in New York, and he sends me a ten-gallon keg of gin every month."

"Ten gallons every month?"

"Yes, ten gallons. Of course, I don't drink a gallon a month myself, but one must always have a little for friends when they drop in, you know."

"Of course—yes—excuse me, mum—but I must taste it agin—just a taste, yer know," and she turned up the flask and took another strong pull at the contents.

Then she handed it back to Myrtis, who held it to her lips as if she, too, was taking a good drink. But she never even let a drop enter her mouth.

"There, you may keep the bottle for your own use, Mrs. Branch, and she pushed the flask toward the old woman.

"May yer never want a drop an' can't get it, mum!" exclaimed the woman, as she took the bottle and placed it in the pocket of her dress.

Then they sat and talked till the old woman was maudlin drunk. Myrtis drew her out in a certain direction, and obtained information she

was eager to get. Leaving the old woman lying across the table at which she sat, she hastened away from the shanty to join her uncle, who was waiting for her out on the street.

CHAPTER XV.—Jack and Tom Busy Once More.

While the women were working with Elsie Slaughter to restore old Mrs. Mullins to consciousness, the men went back to the sitting-room to wait and talk over the new turns things had suddenly taken. She had said enough before going off into the swoon to set them all thinking. And none of them thought harder than Jack Nelson did. She had upset him completely. He was not even Jack Nelson. He didn't know who he was. He wanted to know as much as anyone else wanted to know a thing.

"Well, what do you think of it, Jack?" Ed Slaughter asked.

"I don't know. I'm like one in a dream," he replied. "I wish she had finished before she went off in that faint."

"She is nervous," said Ed, "and when she heard that pitcher fall she thought another stone had struck the house."

"Yes—yes—I know. I am sorry for her. She must suffer very much in being so very nervous."

None of the party present had heard that the stone throwers had been caught and sent away. Bell, Hicks, and Wildey had decided to keep that fact concealed.

"Here comes the doctor," said Ed. "He may tell us something. How is she, doctor?"

"She is doing very well," replied the doctor, "and will get on all right now."

"Has she come to?" Ed asked.

"Yes, but is very weak from fright."

"Brace her up and let's see if we can't get her to resume the story where she left off. I want to have this things ended. It worries my wife almost to death."

"Better not worry the old lady any more to-day. Wait till to-morrow, and I'll be present to hear her."

The physician left the house to attend to other patients, but Jack and two or three friends remained with Ed to see the end of the thing. In the evening Tom Bussy, who had been nearly killed by a flying stone near the cottage which had been burned down, called to see Ed. He was surprised to find Jack and two of the Saicm Boys firemen there.

"You know Jack Nelson?" said Ed, introducing them to each other.

"Yes," said Tom, "we all know him, of course," but he did not shake hands with the young hero, nor even recognize the introduction.

Ed saw the action of his old friend and was indignant.

"Nelson is a friend of mine," he said, loud enough to be heard by all in the room, "and we owe him a debt of gratitude which can never be paid, I fear."

"Yes, I suppose so," remarked Tom, very carelessly.

"There are others who feel as I do," added Ed.

"There are a good many who don't too," said Tom, looking Ed in the face.

"Possibly, but they are not men," retorted Ed.

That was a challenge, and Tom was about to strike, when Jack sprang forward and planted himself between them, saying:

"This is foolish!"

"Yes, when a fool interferes," sneered Tom, putting on his hat and starting toward the door.

Jack sprang forward and planted himself before the fireman.

"Tom Bussy," he said, "I won't resent your remark. I know you are my better enemy. But I have never done you any wrong. I demand of you here and now to say whether I have ever done aught to give you just cause for being my enemy."

Tom glared at him as a tiger would glare at its enemy face to face.

"I am your enemy because you are a disgrace to the fire department of Salem," was the stinging reply to his demand.

Quick as a flash Jack landed a blow between his eyes that laid him out at full length on the floor.

"I beg your pardon, Ed Slaughter," he said, "but I can't stand everything."

"No. You served him right," and Ed grasped the young hero's hand and shook it warmly.

Tom slowly pulled himself together and looked around him in a dazed sort of way. Then he suddenly realized what had happened, and scrambled to his feet, pistol in hand. But Jack was too quick for him. He grasped his wrist, wrenched the weapon from his hand, and held his head, hissing:

"If you don't want to be made worm's meat of take back your words."

Tom was not quite ready to die just to prove that he was game. He spoke promptly.

"I take it all back," he said.

"All right. Others have got to do the same thing, and that very soon. I've stood as much slander as I care to, and hereafter somebody must suffer for what is said to my injury."

Just then the door was thrown open, and Myrtis Banning rushed in.

"Jack! Jack!" she cried, "I know all! I have been to Mayfield. John Nelson is dead, and the wealth that should have been yours always will come to you now!"

CHAPTER XVI.—The Young Girl's Story.

The words and excited manner of the young girl created a sensation. Jack himself was as much astonished as anyone else. He sprang forward and caught her hand in his, saying:

"I don't know what you mean, Myrtis. Can you explain?"

"Yes. I heard enough the other day to convince me that somebody was trying to work up a mystery of some kind, and make it affect your ruin. We have relatives in Mayfield, and so I paid them a visit for the purpose of seeing what I could find out about it. That is where I was going when I told you I was going away."

"Yes," and Jack nodded his head toward her. "I recollect wondering where you were going."

"Well, I went to aunt's house in South Mayfield—she is the wife of John Welsh there—and proceeded at once to hunt up a certain old woman whom you know well."

"Who was she?"

"A certain old lady who lived down across the railroad in one of the old shanties there. Don't call her on now, for it would do no good, as you know how hard she drinks."

"Yes, yes. I know whom you mean but what has she to do with me or mine?" and he looked more and more surprised than ever.

"She has nothing to do with you or yours, only I suspected that she knew enough to clear up the mystery that surrounded you."

"A mystery surrounding me?"

"Yes, of which you have not even suspected," she returned. "One day a lady friend told me that she had heard old lady Mullins say that all those who knew the secret were dead save herself, and that the guilty ones believed the knowledge of the crime she had hinted at had died with Sarah Nelson, whom you had always known as your mother."

"Was she not my mother?"

"No."

"This is indeed a mystery?"

"Yes, and I think I have succeeded in unraveling it for you. Where I have failed I am sure Mrs. Mullins can do it."

"Yes—yes—go on."

"I disguised myself as an old lady and went to see her on the pretense that I wanted to hire a shanty in her vicinity, commodious enough to allow me to let furnished rooms and thus make my rent and food. She took a fancy to me at once. We were together several days, but did not waste much time in house-hunting. I encouraged her to talk and tell me all about her neighbors, and she proved to be the worst old gossip I ever saw. At last she spoke of Jack Nelson, the richest man in Mayfield, who had been dead two months, and said:

"'He died rich, but he had no right to all his wealth.'

"'How could that be?' I asked.

"'He took that which belonged to a child of a friend who died, and left an only son and a big fortune in his care. He gave the heir, then a mere child, to an old woman named Sarah Nelson, and put his own son in his place, and gave him the name of the heir.'

"Good Lord!" gasped Jack, leaning heavily against the door of the middle room.

"You are not Jack Nelson, but Cecil Graham."

Jack gave her a look of dumfounded amazement. He was almost paralyzed with astonishment.

"Cecil Graham," continued Myrtis, "had three strawberry marks on his left arm, which both nurse and physician knew well. The nurse went away, and was gone some ten years or more. Then she came back to see the child, and in a little while discovered that the particular marks were missing. She raised a row, and that night she was mysteriously murdered, and the murderer was never found out."

"My God!" groaned Jack. "I have the marks on my left arm!"

"Yes, you once told me of those marks. Well, the boy disappeared, and the man known in Mayfield as John Nelson, though some people would call him Jack, as they do you, the guardian, remained in possession of the property up to the day of his death, which took place suddenly about two months ago. Now, Jack, you are Cecil Graham, the heir of all that estate which John Nelson had charge of so long."

CHAPTER XVII.—Unfolding the Mystery.

The next day the physician remained several hours with old Mag Mullins, administering medicines to enable her to keep up her strength. Evening came, and with it came Myrtis Banning and Judge Malden, whom Jack had asked to be present as his counsel, if counsel were needed. Mrs. Mullins was much better and she corroborated all that Myrtis had told, and made mention of a package of papers which old Sarah Nelson had left with her before she died, which she had in her trunk. Elsie took the old lady's bunch of keys and opened the old trunk that had been doing service for more than half a century. Among many other things found there was a package of papers tied up with a cotton string. Judge Malden took them and glanced over them. Suddenly he grasped Jack's hand and said:

"Cecil, my boy, you have the documents here to make your claim good, if you have the marks on your person to sustain the statements here made."

Jack threw off his coat, and rolled up his sleeve so as to bare his arm almost to the shoulder. Half way between the elbow and the shoulder were three strawberry marks, very clear and distinct, standing toward each other not unlike the three leaves of the shamrock. The judge examined the marks very carefully, as did the old lady and all the others in the room. Judge Malden lost no time in putting in his client's claim to the estate of his father. While the lawsuit for the estate was going on our hero stuck to his work and ran to the fires just as he had done ever since he became a fireman. He went to the chief of the fire department and begged that the No. 3 company be reinstated.

"On what ground?" the chief asked.

"On the ground that they are able firemen, and therefore needed in case of a large fire."

The order restoring No. 3 to the ranks again was issued that day, but when it was known that it had been done at Jack's request, Tom Bussy and Wright, the foreman, resigned in sheer disgust. That night the great fire bell sent out another alarm, and the Salem Boys, being on hand, sprang away with a promptness that astonished those near the engine house at the time.

CHAPTER XVIII.—And I...

The fire raged nearly all night, and over a dozen houses were swept away by it. Two lives were lost, and a member of Company No. 3 was saved from a horrible death by Jack, who went

to his rescue at the imminent risk of his own life. The daring rescue did much to soften the feeling toward him in the ranks of No. 3. But Nick Bell and Jim Hicks were not to be mollified. The latter had vowed to have satisfaction for the thrashing he had received from the young hero, and waited long and patiently for the time to come when he could do so. A month or so after he met Hicks in a stable where a number of firemen had gone to see some experiments made with a small fire apparatus. They did not speak when they met, and the others noticed it. A very officious individual resolved to make them friends.

"See here, boys," he called out, "Jack and Jim ought to shake hands and be friends."

"Say, you want to shut up," said Jim to the man, "or I'll smash your jaw for you!"

"Oh, you are still mad, are you?" exclaimed the man.

"Yes, and I can lick any man in this stable!" replied Jim.

"Ah, that was meant for me!" exclaimed Jack, turning suddenly around and facing Jim. "I am ready to repeat the dose, Jim."

Both men threw off their coats, and in another moment's time were facing each other with their guards up. The dozen spectators stood around expecting to see our hero knocked out in one round. But they were doomed to be greatly disappointed, for Jack easily outpointed him, and in a few moments he was pretty much in the same condition as on the night of his encounter with the young fireman on the street.

"Do you want me to take you to Mackin's again?" Jack asked.

"No. Give me your hand, Jack," and he reached out his hand toward our hero. Jack took it.

"I am your friend from this time out. This has satisfied me."

Three months later Judge Malden, after a hard legal fight, won the victory, and Jack was declared the legal heir to the Graham estate. The moment he heard the verdict he hastened to tell Myrtis Banning of his good fortune.

"I am glad for your sake, Jack," she said.

"And I am glad, too," he said, "for I want you to share it with me. I love you, Myrtis. Be my wife, and all I have shall be yours. Will you say yes, Myrtis?"

"Yes, Cecil—my Jack!" and the next moment she was caught in his arms and pressed to his heart.

They were soon afterward married, and went to live in a fine house, with servants, horses and carriages, her parents being well provided for.

Next week's issue will contain "THE SWAMP DOCTOR; or, THE MAN WITCH."

Tommy came out of a room, where his father was tacking down a carpet. He was crying lustily. "Why, Tommy, what's the matter?" asked his mother. "P-p-p-papa hit his finger with the hammer," hobbled Tommy. "Well, you needn't cry about a thing like that," comforted his mother. "Why didn't you laugh?" "I did," sobbed Tommy.

CURRENT NEWS

CARVING ON LEBANON

On the face of a cliff in the Lebanon hills Rameses II, King of Egypt, well over 3,000 years ago ordered his stone carvers to inscribe a tablet setting forth his conquest of the land. The figures of the ancient Egyptian ruler and his men still are visible. A few feet away one may see, carved in the same rock by a British stone cutter, a record of the coming in September, 1918, of Field Marshal Sir Ermund H. H. Allenby, G. C. B., commander of the allied forces in Asia Minor. And the passage of the centuries from B. C. 1300 to A. D. 1918 is recorded by a dozen other carvings, each describing the march of a victorious army.

A GIANT SUN

Canopus, the giant of the solar system is, according to a recent calculation, 49,000 times as bright as the sun. Its diameter is 134 times that of the sun; it is 18,000 times larger in surface and 2,420,000 times larger in volume. The distance of it from us, according to this calculation, is 489 light years.

"Suppose," says another authority, "that instead of being at this enormous distance it were

placed in the centre of the solar system, in lieu of the sun? It would then occupy .85 of the space lying within the orbit of Venus, and as seen from the earth would subtend an angle of about 70 degrees of arc. Thus, when its lower limb was on our horizon, its upper would be within 20 degrees of the zenith. Needless to say, no life could exist on earth with such a neighbor.

FISHED UP SACK OF LIQUOR

Hugh Brady, municipal grappler, who has "fished" scores of bodies from the waters of the Willamette River, Oreg., had a surprise recently which made him groan. Several days ago Brady was notified that he likely would find a body in the river bed if he searched for it. Brady searched, his grappling irons firmly clutched something. Pulling and tugging at his lines, lifting the weighty "body" from sixty feet below, Brady puffed and wondered.

Here it comes—in sight—but—the bulky thing was a gunnysack filled to the poopdeck with—bottled exhilaration. It doubtless had been "buried at sea" by a mariner who expected some day to resurrect it. Then came a Government agent who carried the booze away, leaving Grappler Brady to hold the sack.

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The Vanishing Of Val Vane

— Or, —

THE TROUBLES OF A BOY MILLIONAIRE

By WILLIAM WADE

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)

"Yair; we've got to get down to them. I want to locate 'em fust. You see, we are liable to walk off the cliff."

"The cliff?"

"Yair. This level land ends just beyond here. Then we've got to climb down and cross the brook. There's only one place where we can get down, and that's by the falls. I don't hear them. I guess we are lost, all right, but don't fret. It will soon be daylight; then we can easily find the path again."

"It's so blame dark I'm afraid," he growled. "We ought to be almost there now."

He caught up a stone and hurled it out among the trees.

There was no sound.

"We are right onto it," declared Joe. "Mind every step now."

The caution was needed, for not two yards ahead the tableland over which they had been traveling ended abruptly.

Far beneath Jack could see tree tops, but still no sound of falling water could be heard.

Following the edge of the cliff for quite a distance they came at last to a point where the expected sound reached their ears. The splash of water was distinctly heard.

"Now we are all right," said Joe, "but I think we better wait for daylight before we try to go down."

He had scarcely said it when a prolonged cry was heard.

"Help! H—e—l—p! I—am—lost!"

"Say, that's some woman!" cried Joe.

"I hear you!" shouted Jack. "We will help you if we can. Who are you? Where are you?"

"My name is Ellen Reader!" came the distant answer. "I don't know where I am!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Val In The Mountain Camp.

After the departure of Jerry from the hut Val about gave up hope, but not for an instant did the brave boy weaken in his determination, for he felt that to yield to his rascally cousin meant sacrifice of all future freedom of action so far as the Cross Creek mines were concerned.

He lay there listening to the preparations for the firing of the hut when all at once a slight

noise in the outer room caught his attention and he raised his head to see a tall, gaunt man standing in the doorway.

His dress and whole appearance proclaimed him a mountaineer. Putting his forefinger to his lips he tip-toed to the bed, drawing a long knife as he came.

Val thought he was done for.

"Are you going to kill me?" he gasped.

"Nothing of the sort," breathed the man. "Keep silent. I am here to save you."

Quickly he cut the cords and Val stood on his feet.

"Not a sound," he whispered. "Just follow me."

He slipped back into the main room, avoiding the outer door, and now Val saw that over in one corner a small trapdoor had been raised. The man pointed and motioned downward.

Val slipped through the trap, landing on a ladder. He descended a few rounds and, the man following, noiselessly closed the trap, producing utter darkness on the instant.

"Listen!" he whispered. "This ladder is a long one. Are you able to go down in the dark?"

"I think so," replied Val.

"Watch your steps carefully, then. I have a few matches, but I want to save them. We shall find a ladder below."

The descent was perhaps a hundred feet, but there was little play to the ladder; it appeared to be firmly braced.

At last, to Val's relief, his foot touched rock.

"I'm down!" he exclaimed.

"Right," replied the man. "We will have light in a moment now."

He struck a match, and picking up an old lantern, lit it. Val saw that they were in a cavern of considerable size, the only visible wall being the one against which the ladder rested.

"I have made no mistake, I hope?" said the mountaineer. "You are young Mr. Vane?"

"Yes; I am Val Vane."

"As I supposed. You are to follow me."

"Where to?"

"Boy, ask no questions. Is it not enough that I have saved your life? All that was said by Ralph Dubey I heard, for I was listening there under the trapdoor. If I had any designs against you I certainly should not have gone out of my way to save your life."

Val followed in silence. Soon daylight appeared in the distance and the cave narrowed up to a small opening and ended.

"Look out here, but be careful," said the man. "Remain here until you are called."

Val looking through the opening, beheld a truly beautiful prospect.

The cave opened directly on the side of the mountain. A deep valley clothed in living green lay at his feet.

Val saw that it could not be Cross Creek Valley, for the mine was not visible. On the opposite slope here and there were small clearings each with its hut or huts. At one point in a larger clearing were several tents.

It was a peaceful scene if ever there was one.

"It ought to be a paradise, and could be made so," thought Val. "I wonder if I own all this?"

(To be continued.)

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

WHO LICKED STAMPS FIRST?

A claim is put forward for one James Chalmers of Arbroath, Scotland, who submitted specimens of adhesive postage stamps to a committee of the House of Commons in 1834. Rowland Hill is also credited with the invention, having experimented with adhesives in 1837. As Rowland Hill directed the British postal arrangements for many years he was probably the first man to lick a stamp.

FIFTY YEARS WEDDED, WORKING IN A MILL

"We were sweethearts then, and we are sweethearts now," declared Charles Sweeney, No. 17 Winthrop street, Augusta, Me., in speaking of his wife, Elizabeth, the occasion being the fiftieth anniversary of their marriage. The couple are among the veteran workers of the Edwards Manufacturing Company.

They were married fifty years ago at Suncook, N. H. Soon after the wedding they entered the mill and have been employed there since. One child was born to them, but died when young.

Mrs. Sweeney arises at 3.30 in the morning and her husband an hour later to be ready for work at 5 o'clock.

DEADLY NEEDLE DUST

In factories where needles are made the grindstones throw off great quantities of minute steel particles with which the air becomes heavily charged, although the dust is too fine to be perceptible to the eye. Breathing the dust shows no immediate effect, but gradually sets up irritation, usually ending in pulmonary consumption. Ineffective attempts were made to screen the air by gauze or linen guards for nose and mouth. At last the use of the magnet was suggested, and now masks of magnetized steel wire are worn by workmen and effectually remove the metal dust before the air is breathed.

HARDSHIPS OF 1812

George W. White, of Parkfield, Cal., now nearly 90, and crippled, served in the National Guard of California, September, 1862, to September, 1864, without pay. He then enlisted in Co. A, 8th California, and was discharged in 1866. His father and grandfather were in the War of 1812. The latter was taken prisoner by the English. He was put in prison at New Orleans and nearly starved. When his number was drawn he was to be taken out and shot at sunrise. That night he tied his clothes in a bundle and slid down through the toilet sewer into the bay. He then swam ashore, put on his wet clothes or rags and without shoes waded through swamp and brush with nothing but wild fruits and nuts to eat. He dodged the English and Indians—the Indians were hired by the English to bring in the American scalps for a bushel of corn each—and finally reached the American lines.

STONE MOUNTAIN MEMORIAL

Stone Mountain in Georgia is the largest single stone in the world. It is a dome-shaped mass of granite in DeKalb County. Gutzon Borglum has been engaged to depict scenes of the Civil War on its northern face, which is a vertical cliff about 300 feet in height, the figures to be each 80 feet high. It will be the gift of the Daughters of the Confederacy to the survivors of the lost cause, and there will be about 1,000 figures in uniform, representing all branches of the service in the panorama. The rock rises at its highest point about 700 feet above the surrounding level, and it covers about two square miles, with an estimated visible bulk of about 7,500,000 cubic feet.

It is dark granite and a quarry has been made at the northeastern foot. On the north side, under the precipice, which is a natural sounding-board, some enterprising men have planned an amphitheater, where concerts are to be given frequently. There is now a trolley line which runs from Atlanta, bringing people from there and intermediate points to view the wonderful project of nature.

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INTERESTING RADIO NEWS

HOW TO MAKE A SIMPLE RADIO SET

The average amateur who likes to tinker with radios can easily make a set that will receive within a radius of thirty miles at a cost of \$3.50. When atmospheric conditions are just right the set to be described will bring in stations at a greater distance. For ordinary purposes a cheap crystal set will give as good results as the expensive lamp receivers, the only difference being that the crystal set is limited for distance, and does not produce quite so loud a sound. Nevertheless the crystal set reproduces the programmes it catches very clearly, distinctly and quite as well as the more expensive receiving sets.

For the simplest form of receiver you will require very few parts, and if you buy them ready-made in any of the Woolworth ten-cent stores, all you have to do is to assemble them. The writer made one, and living in Brooklyn, he very easily gets W. J. Z. in Newark with remarkable clearness. The cost of the set, including the aerial, was exactly as represented in the following list of parts:

1 baseboard, size 12x55x $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.....	\$.10
2 end boards, size 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ x4 $\frac{1}{8}$ ins., half inch thick20
4 screws for end boards.....	
1 cardboard tube 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ x7 ins.....	.10
4 spools No. 22 enameled wire.....	.40
2 slide rods.....	.20
4 screws for slider rods.....	
2 sliders20
2 medium double binding posts.....	.10
2 small single binding posts.....	.10
1 bottle shellac.....	.10
1 fixed phone condenser.....	.10
2 small bolts and nuts about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches long05
1 crystal galena detector.....	.10
1 crystal holder.....	.10
1 cat's-whisker10
1 composition base for cat's-whisker and crystal10
For the aerial you will need:	
100 feet copper wire.....	.40
4 insulators40
40 feet lead in insulated copper wire.....	.40
1 two-way switch.....	.25

Total \$3.50

In order to assemble the set you proceed as follows:

Give the cardboard tube two goods coats of shellac. When dry three spools of the No. 22 wire is wound on the tube. Commence one-quarter of an inch from one end of the tube by punching two holes through the cardboard, pass the end of the wire in one hole and out the other, then tie or twist it, so it cannot move. Then begin winding the spool of wire around and around the tube, keeping each turn close to its predecessor. It requires three spools to cover the tube up to one-quarter of an inch of the other end. You

will therefore have to solder the end of the wire of each spool to the beginning of the wire of the next spool until the three spools of wire are used up.

The finishing end of the wire is secured the same way the winding was begun, namely, through two more holes in the forward end of the tube. You must leave about 12 inches of wire at the end of the winding. You will need some extra small pieces to hook up the set on the baseboard, and for this purpose you will have the fourth spool. If you cannot get enameled wire cotton-covered wire will do as well.

When the coil is all wound give the wire two heavy coats of shellac to completely insulate it, for the enamel insulation on the wire gets nicked in spots, and the shellac covers these defects.

Next it becomes necessary to mount the coil in the two small square end pieces. This is easily done, as a circular groove is cut in each one 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter. Each end of the cardboard tube is coated with glue forced into the circular grooves in the wood and allowed to dry. Care must be taken that the edges of the tube, at the ends, do not turn back when you shove them into the grooves in the wood. The tube with end pieces attached is next mounted on the baseboard, which can be a piece of pine or white wood 12 inches long, 5 inches wide, and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick. Set that end of the tube at which you began winding the wire at one end of the baseboard, flush with the edge and fasten it there with two thin one-inch screws driven up from under the base. Two more thin screws are put into the forward end board the same way, so that four screws now hold the coil to the baseboard. These screws should be counter-sunk to prevent the heads from scratching the table on which the radio stands when in use.

You next slip the sliders on the slider rods and lay one of the rods from front to back on top of the end boards exactly in the center. There are screw holes in each end to fasten the rods down. But before you put in the screws it is necessary to scrape off a narrow strip of the insulation from the wire wound on the tube. This bared strip runs from front to back and is about 3-16 of an inch wide and directly under where the slider travels. It can be carefully rubbed with fine sandpaper. This strip on the coil is to permit the roller under the slider to make contact with the copper wire of the coil. Make a neat, even job of it, and do not expose any more of the coil wire than is absolutely necessary in the width of the exposed strip.

Having applied the top slider bar, you next put the other bar at the side of the coil the same way one-quarter the distance from the top bar. Next bare another narrow strip of the coil its full length so the roller on the side slider can make contact with the bare wire.

You afterward mount the top small single binding posts on top of the baseboard near the edge, one an inch from the rear end block, and the other an inch from the forward end block. The

stand just under the side slider rod and are mounted by boring screw holes through the wood for the binding post screws.

Next you mount the condenser on the bare forward end of the baseboard, on the side opposite the two binding posts just alluded to. Lay the condenser on the board one end in front of the coil, half an inch from the edge, mark the spots where the screw-holes are, then drill two holes through the board. Lay the condenser holes over the holes you have bored, set the two double binding posts on top of them, and put the screws in upward from under the baseboard. The double binding posts now hold the condenser down flat. The crystal dictator and cat's-whisker are now assembled on the composition base, which is bought drilled for screws.

Two holes are drilled in the baseboard under the screw holes in the composition base, a couple of inches away from the condenser, on the same side, and near the edge. The crystal holder and cat's-whisker holder are now placed on the composition base and the small bolts fasten the whole thing to the baseboard. Countersink the nuts under the baseboard.

That's all there is to the receiver except the wiring, which is done as follows:

A piece of copper wire is fastened to the rear screw that holds down the top slider rod. Run this wire to the bottom of the rear binding post. This binding post is for the aerial. Do not let this wire touch the coil. A small tack on the end block will hold it at a safe distance. Next fasten the 12-inch end of the coil wire to the under part of the other post, near the front end block. This post is for your ground wire. Fasten another small wire to the screw under the ground wire post, and bring the other end of the wire to the screw under the nearest double binding post. The double posts are for the phones. Now get another piece of copper wire, fasten it to the screw under the second double binding post, and carry it over to the bolt holding the cat's-whisker and fasten it. One more short piece of wire is fastened to the forward screw of the side slide bar. You bring it down through a hole in the baseboard and carry it over to the bolt holding the crystal holder and fasten it there.

The receiver is now ready to work. But we must tell you how to erect your aerial before you can get any radiograms from the ether.

First cut your aerial wire into two fifty-foot lengths, and take the kinks out of it. Procure two pieces of wood, preferably cut from old broom handles, about three feet long. Drill holes through both two inches from the ends, to fasten a piece of clothes lines five feet in length. Drawn V-shaped, these ropes are used to hold the aerial up by means of hooks. Assuming you will use two fifty-foot lengths of the wire fasten two insulators to each stick, at the holes, with wire or strong twine. The two lengths of copper wire are then secured to the insulators.

As I had no means of putting my aerial on the peaked roof of my house I fastened one end of it to the backyard fence with a hook and carried the other end up to a window on the third floor and secured it to a hook just above the outside window casing.

Before doing so, the lead-in wire must be se-

cured to the aerial. This is made of any light-weight insulated wire. Three feet from the end the insulation is cut away and a three-foot length is bound and soldered to the lead-in. Each end of the fork is stripped of an inch of insulation and bound and soldered to each aerial wire. The two-way switch is screwed to the outside of the window casing near the bottom. The loose end of the lead-in wire is then bared and fastened to the lever screw, in the middle of the switch. A wire is secured to the upper screw of the switch and carried into the house through a porcelain insulator and fastened to the aerial binding post on the radio. A ground wire is fastened to the lower screw on the switch and led down to an iron drain pipe in the yard. One more insulated wire is fastened to the ground binding post on the radio, and the other bared end of it is fastened to the gas pipe.

The radio is now ready for action, and the method of using it is as follows: First move the arm of the switch into the upper position, which throws the aerial into connection with the radio. When you finish using the set throw the arm of the switch into the lower position, which grounds the aerial; the current will follow the ground wire to the drain pipe and lose itself in the earth.

Having connected the aerial with the radio, you fasten one or two head phones to the double binding posts. Next you move the two slider to a point from two to three inches of the forward end board.

By consulting a newspaper you can see at what hour the broadcasting is going on. With the top slider set you move the cat's-whisker point over the galena stone until you hear voices or music. If it is not distinct keep moving the top slider forward or backward until you find a spot where the tone is clearer. This done, you move the side slider until you find a spot where the sound is still more clear and distinct. These adjustments can be made so that the voices sound as loud in the phones as if a lecturer were in the same room with you. If you prefer a still louder sound, rustonite stones can be bought for fifty cents, and a gold cat's-whisker for 25 cents, and this combination, used instead of the galena stone and ordinary wire cat's-whisker, will give you the maximum of sound to be procured with a plain crystal set. There are new methods of amplifying the sounds in these sets which we will now explain.

Sometimes there is considerable interference between different broadcasting stations, and in order to get away from it, sharper tuning becomes absolutely necessary. To obtain sharper tuning a 23-plate variable condenser can be placed between the forward end of the coil wire and the ground wire. Short connecting wires will hitch this condenser into the circuit without disturbing your radio. When adjusting for signals, move the top slider toward the rear or aerial end of the coil, then adjust the knob of the condenser. You may have to vary the position of the slider and condenser knob a number of times until you get the loudest sounds.

In a future issue of these weeklies we may explain how you can build more complicated receivers and amplifiers for considerably less money than they cost when assembled and sold by radio manufacturers.

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NEW YORK, MAY 9, 1923

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

DISCOVER OLD INDIAN CAVE

An Indian cave hidden away many years from the white man's eyes was recently discovered on the estate of Valentine Hememan at Boothbay Harbor, Me. The cave extends 40 feet under the hillside and can only be reached by a sudden drop of 15 feet over the ledges. The walls are covered with Indian characters, centuries old, it is said. A tangle of grapevines concealed the entrance.

PEAT BOG FOUND IN BOSTON

The discovery of a large area of peat in this city, which could be used as fuel, was announced by Col. Thomas A. Sullivan, Chairman of the Municipal Fuel Committee.

Excavators digging for the new loop of the East Boston tunnel came upon the bog in the course of their work. Before the peat could be used as fuel it would have to undergo an extended drying process, Mr. Sullivan said. As no one appears to want it in its present condition, it is being dumped into the ocean.

EATS WAY OUT OF JAIL

Arthur States, thirty years old, living south of Ottawa, O., in Monroe Township, Allen County, has eaten his way out of jail. He had been sentenced to work out a fine of \$1,000 for liquor law violation.

States had been confined 160 days. During that time County Commissioners estimate that he ate \$90 worth of food at the county's expense and had worked out only \$60 of his \$1,000 fine. Whereupon, to save money for the county, the prisoner was paroled on condition that he pay \$7 a month until the remainder of the fine is paid.

GOLDEN GATE TO BE ON NEW 20-CENT STAMP

Postmaster General New approved an engraving taken from Coulter's oil painting of the Golden Gate at San Francisco as the subject for the new 20-cent stamp in lieu of a cut of Yose-

mite Falls, originally chosen for this denomination.

The difficulty of making a good engraving of Yosemite Falls, which would bring out details and do justice to the scene, made it necessary to abandon the Falls as the subject for the 20-cent stamp. After many selections Coulter's oil painting of the Golden Gate which was placed at the disposal of the department by the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, which in turn obtained it from the Fireman's Fund Insurance Company, was decided upon.

The color of the new stamp will be reddish pink or, in the language of the Bureau of Engraving stock room, "two dollar documentary red," in lieu of the blue color chosen for Yosemite. The engraving from the painting was made by Louis S. Schofield of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, who has engraved a number of the new stamps.

The Golden Gate stamp will be placed on sale at the Department Philatelic Agency in about two weeks.

LAUGHS

Elderly Spinster—You know, doctor, I'm always thinking that a man is following me. Do you think I suffer from hallucination? Doctor—Absolutely certain you do, ma'am.

First Convict—They say it took Milton 15 days to write one page of a book. **Second Convict**—That's nothing! I've been on one sentence six years, and I'm not through yet.

"When you proposed to me you said you were not worthy of me." "Well, what of that?" "Nothing; only I will say for you that, whatever else you were, you were no liar."

Callow Sportsman—You remember when you guided me five years ago, Jake? What caliber rifle was I using that year? **Guide**—I don't know, sir; the doctors ain't never dug out the bullet!

"Well, Harry," said the fair maid, "did popper ask you if you could support me in the style to which I am accustomed?" "No, dear; he merely informed me that he couldn't, and gave me his blessing."

Manager—Mr. Smith, of late your work has been perfunctory. Smith (eagerly interrupting)—Mr. Jones, I've been working here for three months now, and, though I have tried my best, that's the first bit of praise I have received since I've been here. Thank you!

A small boy who was sitting next to a very haughty lady in a crowded car kept sniffing in a most annoying manner. At last the lady could bear it no longer, and turned to the lad. "Boy, have you got a handkerchief?" she demanded. The small boy looked at her for a few seconds, and then, in a dignified tone, came the answer: "Yes, I 'ave, but I don't lend it to strangers."

INTERESTING NEWS ARTICLES

BEAVER BUILDS NEST IN BUSINESS CENTER

A mountain beaver building a nest in a wood pile beside a paved alley in the heart of the retail district, Tacoma, Wash., was trapped the other day. The incident is unusual because the nearest colonies known of these rodents are fully three miles from the spot. The animal had taken lodgings in the rear of a fruit stand and had been carrying discarded apples from the storeroom to its den. Mountain beavers generally inhabit cut-over land where the young second growth furnishes them ample green food.

WATER FOR ROCK BLASTING

There has been more or less employed a hydraulic contrivance for blowing up rocks and reinforced concrete foundations that is based on the principle of the hydraulic press. By means of a pipe line pressure is transmitted to a cylinder 85 millimeters in diameter, in which are eight pistons that telescope, one within another. The cylinder is inserted in a hole drilled in the rock that is to be broken, and the pistons are driven home, one after another, by the water pressure. The machine has proved useful in mines and quarries where the use of explosives would be dangerous.

STONE-EATING ANIMALS

Stones are commonly found in the stomach of the crab-eating seal of the Antarctic Seas; and it is believed that they, with a certain amount of grit, are scooped up with the crustacea from the bottom of the sea. The emperor penguin, on the other hand, shows an instinctive craving for stones for gizzard-grinding purposes; for these stones must be assiduously sought, since these birds never rest upon dry land, but only upon ice. The fate of stones swallowed by birds is not easy to determine.

Another unexpected name in this list of stone-swallowing is that the Sesser Rorqual. This is a "baleen" whale, feeding upon minute crustacea and fish. From the peculiar method of feeding which is, so to speak forced upon this animal, it is unlikely that any portion of its food is scooped up from the sea-floor; hence the pebbles found in its stomach must be deliberately swallowed, and it is supposed, for the purposes of digestion, or, rather, of trituration. They are hardly likely to be derived from the fish which are engulfed, for these are mostly herring.

PERUVIAN POTTERY FOUND ON GRAVES

The American Museum of Natural History is cataloging and arranging a fine series of pottery vessels collected from prehistoric graves on the Peruvian coast. In this collection are beautiful forms of the potter's art. The patterns of these old Peruvian objects will serve silversmiths and others admirably in the designing of urns, vases, carafes, pitchers, card cases and other articles.

Aside from the beauty of their lines and their

decorative designs, the works of Peruvian potters are of great historical value. They most generally represented, in the forms of their vessels, objects familiar to them in their daily life, including their houses, dress and personal ornaments. They even made jars in the form of the human head with faces that were lifelike, undoubtedly intended as portraits. Many animals, vegetables and fruits were made to serve as models for these pottery vessels.

The old Spanish historians were not interested in the works of the Indians, and have given us little information of them; consequently we are indebted to the pottery forms found in their burial places for quite a large part of our knowledge of their daily life, what they wore and their general mode of living.

This interesting collection of early Peruvian workmanship, representing as it does the utilitarian in art, will prove of only small value to the student of early Indian artistic development.

BEETLES SWAP HEADS AND LIVE

Mr. E. G. Boulenger, who recently returned to London from a visit to the Biological Experimental Institute of Vienna, has told the Zoological Society about some amazing experiments which are being performed by Australian scientists.

Perhaps the most extraordinary, he said, are those in which heads of living insects are cut off and successfully transplanted onto the bodies of other insects. Mr. Boulenger stated that he had seen several aquaria in which were living hydrophilus beetles with the heads of dytiscus beetles and vice versa. He had also been shown aquaria with these beetles moving about on the surface of the water without heads at all. Such beetles, he was informed, moved about for three or four days, while those provided with new heads lived for over two months.

The beetles without heads differed from those with the transplanted heads in that when touched they moved by treading water—an obvious reflex action—instead of swimming actively about and diving under water as did those with the new heads. These results have been obtained by Mr. Walter Finkler, a young student.

The heads on being cut off were cemented onto the bodies with the exuding fluid. No suture is required. It appears that the insects so operated on are controlled by their new heads, and not by their bodies. A dytiscus beetle with the head of a hydrophilus beetle loses the characteristic yellow markings on the forepart of the body. Female beetles provided with male heads develop male instincts and court normal females. Males with new female heads cease courting and become passive.

Extraordinary experiments of which an account was given were those in which the living eye of an animal was grafted onto another blinded animal of the same species. Within a few days the blinded animal entirely recovered their lost eyesight. The animals successfully operated on were rats, fish and toads.

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

HOTTEST SPOT ON EARTH

The hottest spot on earth is Furnace Creek ranch in Death valley, Eastern California, 337 feet below the sea level at its lowest point. Only one white man, Oscar Denton of San Diego, has ever survived more than two summers in this place. In the summer months the thermometer sometimes registers 160 degrees Fahrenheit. The surrounding hills are called the Furnace Mountains. Here is mined the world's greatest supply of commercial borax.

CARELESSNESS OF MISSOURI BANDITS

The robbers in Kansas City are getting rather careless. Hezekiah Dinwiddle tells of being held up and relieved of his watch and purse. The thief then compelled Hezekiah to exchange overcoats with him. On putting his hand in the pocket of the overcoat given him by the footpad Hezekiah says he found his own watch and purse and some one else's watch and purse. He says he pawned one of the watches, bought himself a new overcoat and came home \$162 to the good.

BUFFALO STEAK FOR THE MARKET

Before long our northwest lands unsuited to agriculture may maintain buffalo for food purposes. A western packer now has a herd of a thousand of these animals on 25,000 acres of wild-grass country between the Yakima and Columbia Rivers; they were brought by train from South Dakota, the price paid being \$300 to \$400 each. Every year a certain number will be slaughtered for the meat market, and the experiment will be watched with interest.

SNAKE IN STOVE BITES WOMAN

While in the yard at her home near Sugar Hollow, at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Western Albermarle, Va., one afternoon Mrs. Frank James came across a copperhead snake near the wall. She gave chase to the reptile, which made its escape. The next morning when Mrs. James opened the door of her cook stove the snake, which was hidden there, bit her twice. A physician was summoned and she is reported to be very ill from the effects of the poison.

THE INCREASING BEAVER

A bulletin recently issued by the Roosevelt Wild Life Forest Experiment Station of the New York State College of Forestry, at Syracuse University, gives the results of several weeks' intensive study and observation of beavers and their building arrangements in part of the Adirondack region.

It is stated that the busy animals, so nearly extinct ten or fifteen years ago, have increased so rapidly that the farmers are beginning to complain of them as nuisances, because of their damage to standing timber. While exact figures are not available, it is believed that in the territory mentioned there are not less than 8,000 beavers.

THIRTEEN WHALES BATTLE AGAINST ONE

An unusually large school of whales was sighted off Cape Hatteras by passengers on the steamship Fort Saint George of the Furness-Bermuda Line. Purser John Oliver estimated that there was at least fourteen whales in the school.

The biggest in the lot, according to Purser Oliver, appeared to be engaged in a terrific battle with all the rest of the whales. The 265 passengers on the ship watched the fight for about fifteen minutes, but before they passed out of view the water was seen to grow dark red as if with blood and the giant whale was apparently badly wounded.

SCHOOL'S ANTI-FACE POWDER RULE

Rules by school boards prohibiting girl students from using powder and paint are "just and reasonable," and should be enforced, the Arkansas Supreme Court held recently in its ruling on the "Knobel lipstick case."

Four of the five justices concurred in the decision, while Justice J. C. Hart dissented.

Wide prominence was given to the case, which originated when officials of the Knobel High School expelled Miss Pearl Pugsley because she insisted on using face powder.

The Clay Circuit Court refused a mandamus to compel the school officials to admit her to school, powder or no powder, but said the anti-powder rule was not just nor reasonable and could not be enforced. Miss Pugsley then applied to the Supreme Court.

The School Board at Knobel has discontinued the high school course and set aside the questioned rules, saying they were no longer necessary.

BULL TRAMPLES MOTHER AND BABIES

A bull ran wild the other day in the streets of Philadelphia, and dashing into a house attacked a woman and her two daughters. After leading a chase for almost two miles the beast dropped dead with sixteen pistol bullets in its head and body.

Mrs. Nellie Jeffries was trampled under the hoofs of the animal and received a blunt horn in her shoulder, but was not seriously injured. After overturning furniture and smashing crockery the bull headed into the back yard, where Mrs. Jeffries's six children were at play.

Too terrified to move, two little girls were struck and trodden upon. They received only minor bruises, however. The four children rolled from the hoofs of the beast and scrambled to safety.

The animal escaped from the stockyards at Thirty-first and Market streets. A policeman who tried to halt it was bowled over. After running from Mrs. Jeffries's home the bull turned into a coal yard, where it caught a negro and tossed him, unhurt, into a pile of coal. Another policeman killed the animal after emptying the contents of three revolvers.

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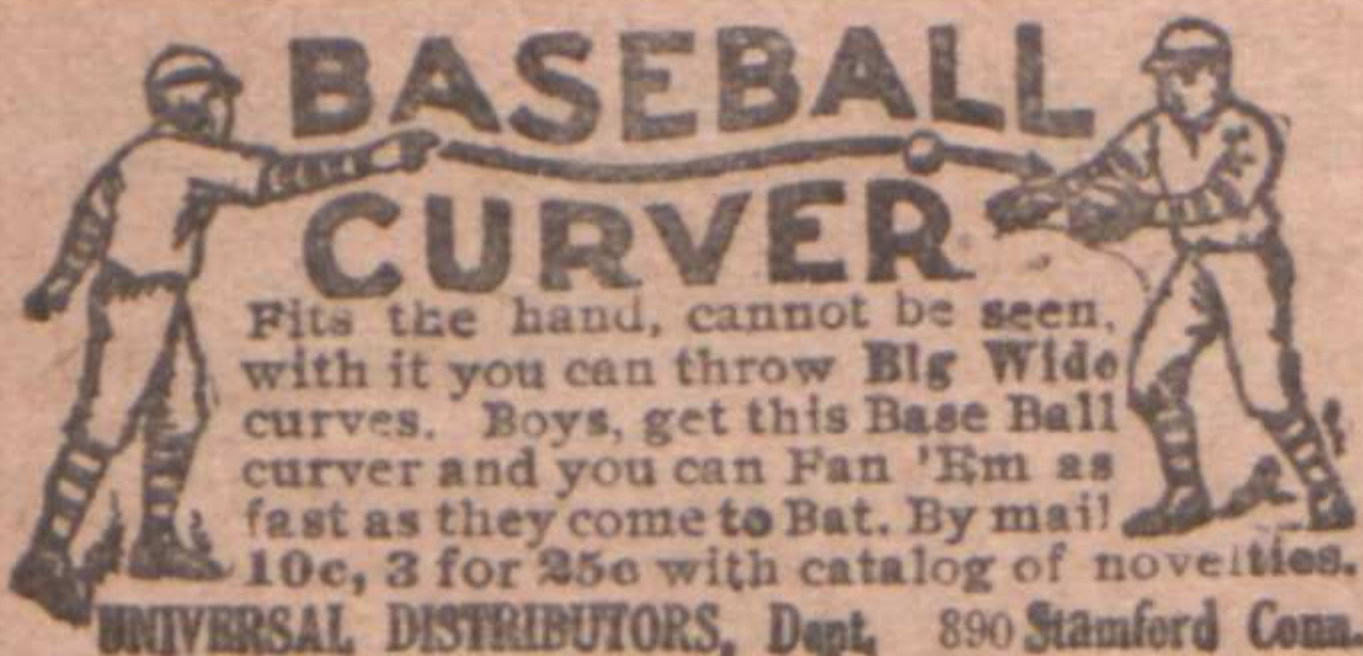
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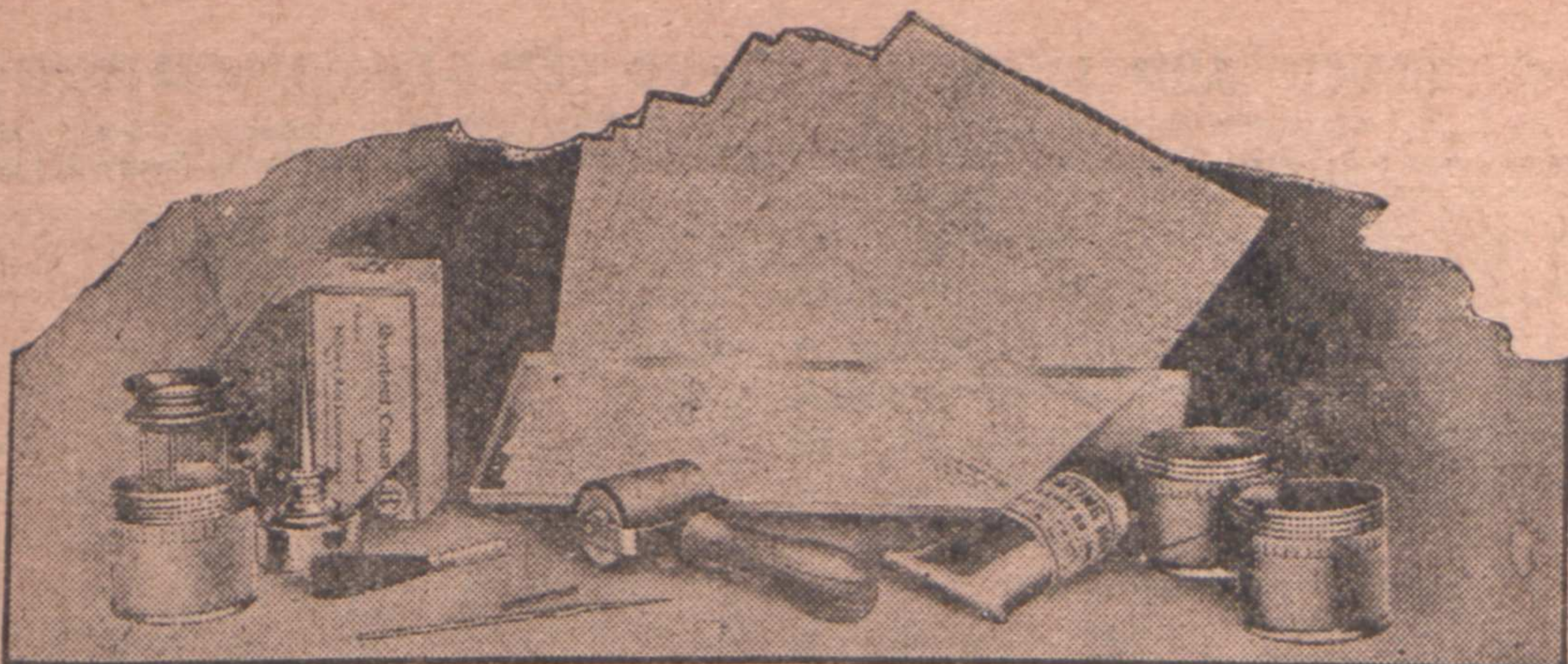
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